The November

G. B. LANCASTER, EDWARD CECIL,
WILLIAM LE QUEUX, Etc.

ROYAL

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Vol 45
Nov-April
1920-1921

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you

will look like yourself again

Your fascination will be the fascination of "Wholeness" of perfect health. The purity of your complexion will stand out in pleasing contrast to the rouge-tinted faces of some about you. The sprightliness of step will be instinct with boundless vitality—never to be confounded with affected grace, however cunningly assumed. Laughter will not be the forced performance of the ennuyees, but rippling and musical because it is natural. Banished will be that tired feeling, interest in life will be keen and broadened. The brain will be clear and active, the spirits serene and glad. You will become a thorough going optimist. In a word, like the fascinating woman, an entirely healthy woman. The culture of merely artifical beauty will not increase personal magnetism, while the intelligent culture of health never fails to do so. Beecham's Pills are the finest aid to personal attractiveness because the beauty they ensure is rooted in the health they establish. When you have this you will say

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Mr. Editor—His Page.

18 *Henrietta Street,*
London, W.C.2.
September 12th, 1920.

The Epistle for To-day.

Probably my daily mail (as they say) is no brighter than anyone else's, but there are occasional gems. It seems a pity, for instance, not to give this petition from Queensland wider publicity. Here it is, just as it came:

"After reading your page concerning Surplus Women I would be obliged if you could procure one belonging to a refined stock for me. I'm sure she would be delighted with Queensland, if not I could bring her back to England. I am very lonesome just now after spending a holiday in the country. I am twenty-seven, so you'd need to get me one about twenty-five or twenty-six; if you could, get her to correspond to my address, also to send her photo.

"I might state just here that I am not by far the only lonesome man. There are many searching everywhere for a mate. If they only knew that there was a surplus of marriageable women in England they would emigrate by the thousand."

Not being a brave person I have declined the honour of "procuring one belonging to a refined stock," for the desolate antipodean. But what have Queensland girls to say about the matter?

On the other hand, a staunch supporter from Ireland writes:

"Dear old Gladdener of tired optics and soother of jangled nerves: The ROYAL for August was high water-mark, so keep it going, old son, and may your shadow never grow less."

We lift our elbow to him—man's noblest tribute to his fellow-man.

Yule.

The Christmas or December Number succeeds this. Sit a little closer and put your ears (only one ear per person, naturally) to the ground. Oh, boy!—some stunt. With jam on it. A sergeant-major's portion, believe me. Listen:

A special enlarged number; sixteen pages in two colours; a "Peter Jackson" story, by Gilbert Frankau; other stories by May Edginton, Christine Jope-Slade, G. B. Lancaster, Perceval Gibbon, Owen Oliver and William le Queux; illustrations in colours, by A. K. Macdonald and Warwick Reynolds.

The price of this special number will be only 1*s.* 3*d.—less than many a packet of twenty cigarettes. Can you believe it? No! But it's true. If any grateful subscribers would like to signify their gratitude to me in a tangible form I should like a* 1920 *Rolls-Royce, please. Thank you!*

Don't forget to take home:

Every Monday - -	PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES.
Every Tuesday - -	PEG'S PAPER.
Every Thursday - -	SMALLHOLDER, SCOUT.
22nd of the Month -	THE NOVEL MAGAZINE.
1st of Month - - -	PEARSON'S MAGAZINE, THE WOLF CUB, HOME COOKERY.

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This is an allegorical picture of Miss Elvira Henderson in the act of bidding her flapper days a long farewe

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"Striking Sixteen."

By Elvira Henderson.

These are the confessions of Miss Elvira Henderson, one of the most charming flappers at present adorning the stage. She is sixteen and looks forward to the day when her hair will "go up" with mingled feelings. The illustrations are from photographs by Elwin Neame, specially taken for the ROYAL.—Ed. R.M.

When Miss Henderson was playing in *Where the Rainbow Ends*, people in the audience used to send her flowers and chocolates. Can you wonder?

Dear Mr. Editor,

So you want to know something about me to put with those pictures you have got hold of from somewhere! Well, I've never written an article before, because after all I'm only sixteen and haven't very many opinions of my own, but here goes.

I'm a flapper now, but I must tell you first how I started my present career. I trained under Miss Italia Conti for four years and at the end of that time to my great pride and joy, I found myself before the footlights playing Little Betty Blunders in *Where the Rainbow Ends* at the Garrick Theatre. I have never had such a charming part as that one since or one to bring me so many surprises in the way of chocolates, letters and flowers. Well, of course all these lovely things made me quite make up my mind to go on and try to get to the top of the tree now I had once started.

From this stepping-stone I changed into a Golden Fairy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Savoy Theatre.

Now I will leave my childhood behind me and try and convey to you a few of my impressions of Flapperland. I never thought it would keep me so busy. I find I have no time these days for such pastimes as hop-scotch, marbles and turning cartwheels at which I really used to be quite an expert.

The only time I can indulge in these kind of amusements is when I am at the seaside or swimming baths, as now my skirts are much too long and my frocks too dainty.

However busy I am I always manage to find time for my wardrobe. But, on the other hand, if growing up means tucking my curls away and being prim and proper that's not me, as I could never be prim, though I am called plain by many of my pals.

The days I look forward to most of all in my new busy life are Sundays, which, weather permitting, I spend on the roof in my roof garden with my brother, who has always been

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"I've no time nowadays to play hopscotch, at which I used to be quite expert, as my skirts are too long and my frocks too dainty——

I've been asked to write this article. I'm finding it rather hard work, but it's new and a little bit exciting.

That's one of the things I like about the stage—all sorts of people are so interested and friendly. I said further back that I used to get heaps of flowers and letters from "in front" during one particular piece. Well, I might work like the dickens at some other job, and no one would ever write and say they liked my work, or anything nice of that kind.

Pr'aps you think that sounds greedy, but my greatest pal and who is now getting quite used to the *rôle* of chaperon.

I find that instead of teachers and people rapping my knuckles that a few younger people have found quite a different and more romantic use for them. Of course there are a lot of drawbacks in growing up as well as the nice side. One of my greatest sorrows is my not being able (I mean not without a lot of horrid looks from people) to go down to bathe when away at the seaside, just any old how and looking perfectly ghastly but very happy, as I used to.

It seems also a little boring sometimes not to be able to say just whatever comes into your head and do just what you fancy, but it's awfully nice to have little attentions paid you and invitations to dances, and so on.

It is also rather nice to find people taking an interest in one's career. For instance,

——But if growing up means tucking my curls away and being prim and proper, that's not me!"

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it isn't altogether greed (although I like chocolates as much as anyone). It's just, I suppose, that everyone loves to be appreciated.

I wouldn't like people to think I'm idle, because honestly I'm not. The public only sees the actual performance at the theatre, but that's the result, and the hard work's put in before the curtain goes up.

For instance, I have lots and lots of dancing practice to do, besides dancing lessons and singing lessons. If it comes to that, even being photographed is a little bit tiring after the first hour or so. And work has to go on, rain or shine, whether one's full of beans or afflicted with a bad go of the hump.

But I s'pose it's all good in its way, for as you grow up you have responsibilities, and these must be faced. One of the first things they teach you in professional dancing is always to smile. If you walk into a ball-room or a dance-club and watch the dancers, you won't always see them smiling. Most of them look deadly serious. (Pr'aps they're thinking about their feet and afraid of making mistakes.)

"One of my greatest sorrows is not being able to go down to bathe when I'm away just any old how; and oh! for the games of marbles of my youth!"

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"Nowadays, instead of teachers and people rapping my knuckles a few younger people have found a more romantic use for them."

But on the stage a dancer must always keep smiling. She has to cheer up the audience you see. And that's good for her because if you make yourself smile you end by cheering up yourself as well as the people looking on.

I must just say one thing; in one of the pictures I've got a cigarette in my mouth, but I don't really smoke. The cigarette wasn't even alight. It was just put in to suggest the growing-up idea.

I don't think because I'm getting out of my flapper days that life's going to get

"It's a little boring not to be able to say just what comes into your head, and do just what you fancy."

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"I find myself gradually climbing the hill of success, and please may I never meet a pal coming down!"

dreadfully serious all of a sudden. Anyhow, I hope not.

There are lots of little funny happenings in a theatre that keep one from getting dull, and where there are a lot of girls it's hard luck if one or other hasn't something amusing to contribute to the general gaiety.

P'raps the most exciting affair in connection with me was my first proposal, which I may say with some pride, has already happened, if I *am* only sixteen.

He didn't come in person, take off his hat, bow gracefully, and kneeling at my feet beg me to bestow on him my hand, like the princes always did to the princesses in my fairy-tale books.

No, he simply wrote a letter like somebody applying for a situation. But I've got it still, and somehow it'll always be different from any other I'll ev r have. You see, it's the first.

I didn't open it with any great excitement, because, of course, I didn't know what was in store for me. Then my eyes began to bulge. Then, somehow or other, I started giggling, and just giggled and giggled.

The other girls wanted to know what was the matter, and then we all giggled together.

I won't tell you exactly what he said, because that wouldn't be fair. It was quite nicely put. He was rather young, I think—like me.

I'm going to get an album and paste up all my proposals in it, but this first one shall be on the cover, for luck.

Just lately I was at the Hippodrome about three months, dancing in *Jig-Saw* and quite enjoyed it, though I found it rather hard work. While there I was engaged for another Musical Comedy that was going to be produced in London.

So I find myself gradually climbing the hill of success, and please may I never meet a pal coming down!

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Lone Patrol Sangar.

By G. B. Lancaster.

Illustrated by W. R. S. Stott.

THE young cottonwoods alongside the fence of the Hudson Bay Store stood naked in the snow, and down the slope leading into the pine-forest, the trail, hardened lately by the out-going of the trappers, was rigid as iron. In the utter stillness a burring of runners on it sounded like the drone of bagpipes long before the man loping alongside his sled came in sight of the Factor standing at the store door.

But the Factor knew him the instant he raised the curve of the slope; for, although he ran light as an Indian, no Indian ever had that height or breadth of shoulders, and only one white man who ran and looked like that used the fanned-out dog-team preferred by the Pelly River Indians, instead of stringing them in a line. Before he ever went into the Mounted Police Le Beau Sangar had often made his winter travelling in that way, and always with dogs bred as near as may be to the wolf, and enduring and wild as himself.

Through these last two years Le Beau Sangar had earned another name along the rivers. Men called him Lone Patrol Sangar now, and many a time the Factor, sitting over his fire o' nights, had visions of the great brilliant-eyed, silent man running, running through the forests and down the frozen rivers and across the empty barrens by his wolf-dogs, as if in endless pursuit of something which evaded him.

More than Jamieson guessed at that which Le Beau Sangar sought and never found, for there are many men who have spilled in the sands the cups they raised to their too-eager lips and have spent the rest of their lives unslaked because of it. But the policeman's face showed none of that now, as he halted the dogs with a sharp word and greeted the Factor, while they dropped, panting in the snow with lolling tongues and snarling lips. Le Beau had the heavy whip ready in his hand, and one part of his senses alert for trouble the while he talked. He was big and powerful, even in a land of such men. It was said in the North that he could see with his elbows and heels and his moccasin-strings; and that he, better than many a hundred more, could piece the tangled stories which came to him along those countless trails that run wide through the wilderness, secret as the men who come and go on them.

Always he had been the essence of the Lone Patrol; hawk-wild as his forefathers, soft-footed as a wolverine, untiring as a black bear, and callous to ordinary suffering as any fish of all the great waterways that press at last among crashing bergs to the Arctic seas. But he had the animal sensitiveness, too, and that strange flying spirit which continually urges some men to desperate leaps from the mountain-tops towards the stars, and forbids despair when they fall, shattered and cursing, on the rocks below. He was smiling now, with a warm, dark flush under the smooth tan of his skin, and just the tips of his splendid teeth showing.

Jamieson felt a twinge of uneasiness. Le Beau was always a special devil when he smiled like that, and although his own conscience was not particularly murky, he could not say the same for all his friends. But it was twenty minutes later, when Le Beau had drained two steaming mugs of coffee and his pipe was nearly done, that he came to the point. And the Factor did not know that he had already learnt most of what he expected to learn. He leant back now, crossing one moccasined foot over the other, and proceeded to count what he had won.

"Let's see, now. You say Hex's Timber Reservation is on the Ladine, somewhere around a day's run from here. He's cleaning-up from two camps at once, with nearer a thousand than five hundred men on the

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pay-sheet of each. He has a log house of his own on the Reservation, and he's there now, raising Cain over getting out timber for the new whalers he's building——"

"I never told you that."

"You told me the rest—and more, too. Did you tell all you knew about that business last year when a lumberer was murdered at No. One Camp?"

The Factor opened his keen little eyes.

"Now, Le Beau! Who you got it in for now, eh? Sure, I did. An' if I didn't it ain't for sale."

"It will be in a minute, if you're monkeyin' around any."

"Oh, come off the roof! Why, the murderer was convicted and hanged."

"A man was convicted, yes. And there was a tidy lot of perjury there to go into. But he wasn't hanged. One of the perjurers produced a conscience at the last minute and accused someone else. That's what brings me here."

"Le Beau, you'd accuse the devil if you took a fancy to doin' it. But you can't accuse me."

"Oh . . . you!" Le Beau laughed. It wasn't a nice laugh. "No. It's Hex is accused."

"Hex!" The Factor gaped. "*This* Hex?"

"Sure. This Hex. Tom Hex, the millionaire. Hex of the Hex line of whalers in the Arctic and the Hex line of steamers tradin' to Japan. Hex. . . ."

He broke off suddenly, and stood up. Always he stood with something of the erect, easy grace of a young Indian. He did not say "Hex who married Virginia Lowrie of Whoop-Up," but if Jamieson had been less upset he would have supplied the omission. That marriage, now some years old, had been one of the marvels of the rivers.

"This sure knocks me out," said Jamieson. He rubbed his hands over his bearded face. "Say, Le Beau, you're funnin'. That feller's conscience's been workin' overtime. You can't accuse Hex. Look what he's got behind him."

Le Beau pulled on his mittens.

"I'm goin' right down to Ladine to get him now," he said. "I'm goin' alone, but if I'm not back to-morrow you'll know they've got me beaten up, an' you'll want to communicate with Eureka right away. Mind that, Jamieson. There'll be a circus with all the monkeys loose at once if you don't. We're bound to get Hex while he's in Canada, but he's got a hunky lot of brutes down there, and they might risk it and rough-house me. You'll have to let Eureka know if I don't turn up. Then they'll pass the word up through Dawson and Forty-Mile and away down river."

"See here, Le Beau." The Factor was distressed. Half his business came from the lumberers. "I guess your lot has bitten off more than you can chew. Even if Hex did it, and you've only got some fool idiot's word for it——"

"He did it all right. I knew it on the evidence. But Harnard worked the case up, and I couldn't butt in. I guess it's not going to be another break-away for him.

Le Beau did not say that, being stationed at Eureka when the word came through, he had gone straight upstairs and packed his outfit and had it strapped on the sled before the Sergeant could object—if he had wanted to. But there was no man in the force had Sangar's strength and knowledge of the country, and he would have been sent in any case. The fact that he wanted to go was his own business. There was none would tell Le Beau to his face that it was because Hex had got the better of him on two counts, and the time had now come to even things up. But all knew it. Jamieson, following glumly out to the door, knew that he might as well have talked to a brick wall. But he couldn't resist it.

"You'll never get him convicted—not on this earth. He'll be out by some back door, an' before you've got your extradition warrant——"

Le Beau laughed with a flash. His bright glance was roving over the husky-harness and the sled. The least matter wrong with either would be pounced on as a hawk pounces on a rabbit. Jamieson wondered that he had not pounced on the weak point in his case. Perhaps he had?

"Oh, warrants," he said lightly. "We're not fooling any with warrants. Once Hex makes San Francisco he'll hold a royal flush against every bluff we can put up. Lord, Jamieson, don't you know what graft is *yet*? We'd never get him out of his own town, and we'd never get him convicted there. He'd have us all beaten up. Mister Tom Hex, Esq., swings a mighty swag of votes in more parts of the world than one. We'd never have a jury convict him down there."

"He can't bribe the law——"

"You darn well see if he couldn't—if he got a look-in." Le Beau had his eyes on his watch. Forty minutes was the spell he had allowed here, and there were yet a few minutes to run before he called the dogs up off their haunches. "Oh, Hex is a bucko, all right. We'd be up against the whole police and political machine of half the States. Once he got back he'd manage to

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Le Beau did not move. The revolver is in his hand now. . . . The huskies, scenting fire, swerved from the trail and headed, floundering, through the snow and into the firelight.—

have the trial in his own State on the ground that the murdered man was an American—get the widow to lodge a straight claim before we could file ours, or something. Then he'd be tried on his own ground, and the machine would work and we'd be pipped. Oh, sure! Mighty near anything that walks on two legs is bribable, and I've seen unpunished cases of open graft that would maybe shock you, my friend——"

"Well, I guess the newspapers——"

"They won't fight the administration. Votes again. No, once Hex is out of this country he's got us. He'll have a whole

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— From the sled the other man looked out on the two with grinning teeth and set eyes and a white, frost-bitten face in an icy trap of frost-tipped, black beard. [*Page 20, col. 2.*]

nest of perjuries hatched in a day that we won't strangle in a year. So he's to be taken here, and don't you forget it. Mind, if I don't turn up to-morrow send the fastest man you've got to Eureka. They'll have to get busy then."

"Say, if the last case was cooked up, some of those lumberers will sure be wise to it. You watch out, Le Beau."

Le Beau nodded, snapped his watch, and thrust it inside his fur coat. He made no comment, but those who knew him best knew that he spent his life in watching out. Hex was one of the few men who had fooled

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him—when once he let natural pity overrun wisdom. He would not do it again. Now he picked up the sled-pole and stepped forward.

"Mush!" he said, and swung off beside the team down the dark line of trail towards the woods. Jamieson stared after him, frowning. One policeman was as safe as fifty when it came to white men who knew the law. But he would have bet a good deal that Le Beau Sangar would be badly mauled before he took Tom Hex.

The day was cold and cloudy. The sun, which lifted above the horizon for a bare half-hour at mid-day, was gone long since, and all the world was shadowed to a dull uniform mysterious gloom, natural enough to Le Beau, although it might speak to a newcomer with a threat. Between the two lines of tall Douglas firs the huskies trotted stoutly—great grey wolf-dogs, with brushes curled and wicked sidelong looks. Strung as they were no dog could touch the one ahead, and yet he was always trying to. They set a brisk pace, and the man loped alongside, flirting the soft snow from the snow-shoe heel expertly, and eating up the miles without effort. He should make the Reservation before dark, and once Hex was before him there would be no time wasted. The blood between them was too bad for that, even if it were not common knowledge that he ill-treated the wife whom Le Beau would love till he was dead—and after, if that fiery spirit of his still persisted in its headlong challenge of the worlds.

He skirted an open morass and came among the woods again, and it was near dark when the dogs smelt life ahead of them and hurled themselves forward in the breast-harness. Here the trail had been cut up. It showed black and frozen through the white carpet, and the sled bumped and skidded down it and out to the slope where fallen timber lay like dead giants, waiting to be sledged to the river.

The three or four big shanties in the clearing looked unsubstantial in the gathering veils of night, but the resinous smoke of burning spruce went up from them, and the smell of life overcame the snow-tang and the forest-smells for the first time that day.

Now the dogs were alert for the other dogs, those stealthy packs slinking in the shadows, as their ancestors had done, launching themselves on the newcomers with a wild hullabaloo which brought the men jumping out in twos and threes to see the policeman laying about him promptly in the midst of the whirlwind.

A big, soft-throated Mackenzie hound was badly torn and his owner aggrieved; but Le Beau, looking round on the whole hard-eyed, tough-run crowd, knew that this was no time to show weakness.

"Send a claim in to the fellow who gave your dog a soft throat. It wasn't me. Who's running this layout? I want to speak to him."

A foreman lurched forward, looking at the Law hostilely. Le Beau knew that hardly a man there but would lie if he thought he could gain by it. And several must have lied for Hex already. But there could be no warning up this way yet. The word had come in cypher to Eureka, and he had made good time.

"Good-evening," he said. "I've come over from Eureka with a message for Mr. Hex. Can you tell me where he is?"

The foreman glanced round on the others. Le Beau believed he sent warning.

"Aw, come in, sir," said the man. "Fust thing, yeh know, yeh'll git froze out here."

Le Beau knew the interior of a lumberer's shanty well enough—the great, solid oblong of logs, with the men's bunks round three sides of it and the cooking-tables down the fourth, and in the centre, open to the sky, an eternal blazing fire with the cooking-cranes above it. Once in there he was trapped, if the men so chose. He shook his head, smiling.

"Guess your huskies'd chew mine to a frazzle, thanks all the same. I daren't wait, either. My instructions were to let Mr. Hex have that message right away. Where's his house?"

"Just exactly what was yeh wantin' of him?" demanded the foreman.

"Just exactly what business is that of yours—or mine? I was told to deliver this to Mr. Hex right away. If I don't, he'll know who he has to thank when he does get it, I promise you."

For all their sullen mistrust they dared go no further. But Le Beau saw them watching as he went up the hill, following the foreman's directions. A short twenty minutes later, hammering on the door of the locked, empty house, he wondered how much they knew.

Then he stood and considered. This was an unexpected check. He would get nothing from the men, and housebreaking was not likely to be encouraged by them. But in cases of deduction Le Beau had a cunning skill of his own.

There had been a slight fall of snow yesterday, and yet heavily-laden sleds had drawn away from the door since. The house was locked and shuttered and fireless.

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Therefore Hex had gone to-day, and he had gone for good. The men did not know it yet, or they would not have tried to stop Le Beau. Then — Hex had fled because he knew what Le Beau was coming to tell him, and his trail was not yet cold.

Le Beau, putting himself in Hex's place, saw Hex's three choices. He would make for San Francisco with all his powers, of course. To go south, where police posts dot the way thickly to the sea, was a risk which a man of his brain would never consider.

He could go down the Yukon Delta and hide among the Innuits on the chance of a whaler calling there in spring, or he could make a dash over the Dawson Macpherson winter trail and follow down the Mackenzie to Herschel.

It was rarely some half-dozen whalers did not lie for the winter at Herschel, and, once under the American flag—probably aboard a vessel of his own—Hex would be as safe as in San Francisco—very nearly.

Le Beau knew that Hex would try for this, just as he knew that the millionaire had gone off with two or three well-fitted sleds, and probably three or four Indians, and would travel direct, while he himself would have to make for Dawson first.

He arrived at Dawson fit for nothing but sleep. But while his dogs were cared for he stayed awake over his food long enough to battle with the Superintendent.

"I don't want a whole bunch of men, sir. You can't whack 'em along. Give me a second team an' a couple of Indians—Peels, if you have 'em. I know all this country like the devil knows hell. And if Hex is ahead he'll maybe have to break the trail out. I'll guarantee to catch him if you let me outfit the way I want."

"It would be rank mutiny in another man," said the Superintendent to the Inspector later. "But you can't treat Le Beau that way. And if he wants a Lone Patrol he'll have it—lose the men we send with him, like as not. I don't know that he isn't right, either. Indians can keep up with him. I don't know a white man here that could."

"Nor anywhere else. Let him do it with the Indians. Masson and I went over with only two last year."

"You were both whites. Well . . . we'll want to send a patrol down to Yukon on the chance. If Hex strikes Herschel first we lose him for the time, anyway. And if Le Beau can't catch him no one can."

While the machinery was set to work Le Beau lay on his back in heavy sleep in a bunk at the barracks, with the men coming in to look on him as trainers look on a man marked out for a great fight. The case had excited them, and they envied Le Beau's luck, just as they knew that he was the only man physically worthy.

"Changed some since I remember him first," said a corporal. "Don't never look at a woman now, nor drink this last two years. An' if he didn't use ter put up the dangdest kind o' rict over both! Gee! Always a good-looker, Le Beau. Women chased him. He won't look at 'em now. Some say it's over the woman Hex married. You bet he's madder than a settin' hen 'bout this. Hex has run plenty o' bunco games, an' broke away every time. He won't break from Le Beau. Gee! An' did you notice his team? All played out himself, he was, but he sure had nursed the dogs. Don't want to replace one."

"He bred 'em himself," said a constable. "They're savages all right. First thing you know they got yeh all chawed up. But Le Beau is a great knocker. Hex stung him once—twice, if you count the woman. He won't do it again."

He repeated that a little later, with a note of doubt, watching the small black specks on the tumbled white surface that rose to the towering white masses against the sullen sky. They looked so very small, so helpless, charging valiantly at those terrible foreheads of steel with the breath that kills. For a moment he felt the brooding immensity of Nature and the slightness and briefness of human life acutely. Then the specks disappeared. Le Beau Sangar had gone, taking his private grudge and his indomitable spirit into the wilderness with him.

Now the hunt was fairly up there were few could make the pace hotter than Le Beau Sangar. Through the first days, as they swept down trails already passed by trappers coming in with fur, he tried out Smoke and Charley until the two wiry little Indians had a respect near to alarm for the tall, silent, wolf-sinewed man who rarely rode, even when the crust was hard. The edge of the long night was well-turned now, and for a little the sun dazzled the peaks each day. But of nights, when each took his turn of guard over the roaring fire in the dark hush of the pines, the Northern Lights, those banners of winter, blew wide, in thin electric blues and scarlets against the inky sky.

One summer Le Beau had captained a river-steamer named *Northern Light* for sake of her who was now Virginia Hex. Seeing her face in the Society papers often enough since then; hearing her talked over and betted upon—for the wife of Tom Hex, millionaire and savage, could not but have

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stories gather about her—he had loved and hated and cursed her, and forgiven her at times for the wrong they had done each other. He believed that he never wanted their trails to cross again. She had meant too much; and because contact with Hex could not help but smirch her, Le Beau stood now where he wanted to keep his dreams and his tangled memories unstirred. Since he came into the police he had locked his mind on his work. It was on it now; driving him, blazing in him until the force of his personality acted on the Indians, on the dogs. Well-known as this winter-trail was to all, they had never dreamt that it could be taken at such pace without exhaustion.

Slowly the great waste drew them in, where the cold ate with icy fangs to the heart of the thickest bushes and the rime of their breath was white on hair and lashes and furs. A blizzard caught them, sweeping its Arctic blasts and swirling snow across the ice-tipped ranges. But they lay low for a half-day only, although the Indians grumbled to themselves when Le Beau whipped up the trail again. The new snow, dry and drifting as sand, had blotted the trail, but a faint depression and the harder undergoing told these men that someone had lately broken trail ahead. Indian, or white man? Hex, or a stray trapper? Le Beau could not tell. But he believed that the passing weight had been heavy, and he went like a dog nosing out the way, with the passion of the hunter leaping full tide in him. He had much to pay Hex for on his own count, apart from the fact that the millionaire was what he was.

Coming up a cañon with the great bluff faces rising white and relentless before them to the grey skies, they saw a new-pitched tepee standing almost on the trail. There were no sled-marks about it, but moccasin signs were faintly clear. Le Beau halted. His keen mind recognised a trap of some sort. He glanced down at Charley.

"Tepee-strings inside, eh?" he asked.

"I think um tie—um sit down in tepee, I think."

"Same here."

Motioning the teams to wait he turned aside into the woods. Then, running in swiftly, he slashed the ties with one up-cut of his knife, and had his revolver ready at the height of a man's chest before the face in the gloom was clear to him, glimmering like a white flower in the dusk.

"Virginia!" he cried.

Then, the hunter instinct being the man's real expression, he had her by the arm, staring past her into the tepee. There was a bed of spruce branches and fur robes; food and a little burning oil stove. He went over, with revolver drawn, and kicked the bed to bits. The place was empty, nor was there any trace that a man had been in it.

Dazed, unbelieving, he turned back to her. In the short skirt, the long fringed gaiters and mocassins, the fur parka with hood clipped close under her chin, she looked very young and small. And her face was very beautiful—so beautiful in the fair and spiritual stateliness of it that for the time he had neither thought nor words.

He stood, stooping a little to her, with their eyes plunging each into each and reading there more of passionate love and pain than either had prayed or feared to see. A sudden glory came to her face, like the opening of a flower to the sun. Then, as suddenly, it faded, and Le Beau saw the horror of memory come back. He put his hand up.

"Be careful what you say! I may have to use it against you."

"I know."

She spoke as though the bondage of centuries held her—as indeed it did. She was Hex's wife, with all that it meant, and she could not betray him. But Le Beau had given the warning automatically, as a policeman must give it. He had no scruples about getting what he could later, and after the crash of recognition, which had been almost as violent as a blow between the eyes, his brain was already taking hold again.

She was here to prevent him in some way, to decoy, persuade, betray him into Hex's hands while he slept.

"How long have you been here? Two days? Three?"

"I can't tell you that."

"You'll tell me when I have time to listen. That, and everything else."

He flung a quick glance round again, and ran out, shouting to the Indians. But almost before she had fought off the sudden faintness that shook her he was back, with his own sled, where the cargo had been part shifted, drawn up to the opening, and such belongings as she had swept up in his arms.

"Get on that sled—right away."

"I—I can walk——"

"Walk!" He swung out like a whirlwind. "Get aboard."

She felt the hard pressure of his hands as he wrapped the robes, heard his hard breathing, saw the hard blaze in his eyes. He had been brutal to her once, this man. That he could and would be again, if need arose, she knew well; and knew, too, that all she had borne from her husband would

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be as nothing beside the grief this other could cause her.

A thousand times she had told herself that she had overcome that love, wrung it out of her heart, drop by drop. Now, at sight and speech of Le Beau Sangar, she knew it lived, burning as ever it was. She sat rigid, with hands gripped inside the fur mittens and teeth in her lip, while he picked up the whip and went forward.

"Mush!" he called, in the deep voice which had lost its gay recklessness, and the straining dogs took up the trail as the Indians broke the runners out.

There are winters when neither white man nor Indian passes the Dawson-Macpherson trail for months at a time. But luck was with Tom Hex this year. Two bunches of Loucheux who had spent the summer on the Yukon had gone over ahead of him, and although turning aside after meat now and again, they had kept the trail on the whole.

Hex, with three teams of nine strong huskies, and two extra Indians to break trail when needed, had still a long, a stern journey before him, and the knowledge that from Macpherson to Herschel he might have to break his own trail. But he had provided the most effective drag in his power when, two days before, he had left Virginia in the tepee, unrealising yet the full and hideous extent of his craft and cunning.

Through that time of utter silence and bravely-met strain she had not realised, as she knew that she did now, while she sat on the flying sled, with the lashed dogs swinging down the cañon at a canter, and Le Beau leaping alongside with great strides. The other team fell behind. Le Beau would have to allow for its slower pace soon. But he had beaten into his wolf-dogs something of the rage in himself, and the white snow sprayed from the runners as they fled with the white girl motionless among the furs.

Already Le Beau had pieced this out in his mind. The Indian telegraphy of the North is the one thing which can beat a policeman every time. In some way Hex had subsidised it, made it in places a part of his machine of graft. It had told him who was his hunter, and so Virginia had been brought to drop overboard when the pace grew too hot, exactly as men chased by wolves drop overboard anything likely to delay the pack.

The odds had been about even before, offsetting Hex's start against the chance that he might have to break trail. Now they were definitely in favour of the man whom Le Beau pictured drawing ahead hour by hour, that crafty, black-bearded face of his grinning because Le Beau Sangar would be forced to pick up his discard.

Still they ran, those wolf beasts who moved, not like dogs, but with the peculiar sliding gait of a smooth piece of mechanism which is heritage of the wild only; and still Le Beau kept them at it, with passions blazing in him, through the thick dusk, with a dropping temperature, and the stars like crystals in the flat, black sky.

But while the three men built the fire and cooked, and cut spruce branches on which to lay the buffalo-robes, the woman sat apart. Le Beau never spoke to her when he brought her food, except once. She took the plate from his hands, looking at him straightly.

"Leave me here with one of the Indians and go on. I prefer it."

"No," he said only. But the emphasis was heavy and direct as a blow. This was his business, and he would have her know that he kept it so.

He turned away at once, examining the harness, bit by bit, in case of frayed leather or weakened buckles, while the Indians laid it out round the fire so that it might keep supple against the morning.

He gave his orders and clubbed the dogs out of a sudden fight as she had seen the men of her world do often enough—but never one who had been so dear and so terrible to her as this man.

The look of love which she had seen in the first moment was gone, and, knowing him, she doubted if it would come back, just as she did not doubt that he would try to take from her such knowledge as he wanted—when he wanted it.

The next day was the same, and then she began to see her punishment. Because she could not keep pace with the straining sinews and virility about her she must submit to weighing the whole outfit down to a slower speed. Because she would not tell him what he wanted she should tell him nothing—not even the casual speech of strangers met for a day. Accepting his decree in a pride equal to his own, she never tried to speak, except when the cold, striking in to her bones, warned her that she must get down and walk, even though this meant arriving in camp when the fires were lit and the whitefish thawed out and given to the dogs, and the damper cooking in the ashes. Le Beau never waited for her—this was the policeman and the savage in him. But her robes were spread on the springy spruce, and the little tent was pitched for her and the coffee waiting. This was the man, and how much it was the lover also her wearied senses did not care to guess.

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Days went by. Le Beau, brooding and avage, kept night watches that Virginia ıever dreamt of. It was possible that Hex night now be trailing him, looking for a hance to get a shot at him or his team, and vith an *alibi* all ready, and some stray ndian to be the whipping boy. This was ıot likely. Hex would be too concerned vith the effort to reach Herschel. But it vas one of the many morsels of hate and uspicion which he daily rolled on his ongue. For forty hours on end it snowed—. fine, damp, cloudy packing snow which linded and stung the eyes and cut the skin, nd bent the stunted firs and wiped off the pore of animals as though it had never ıeen. It seemed to Le Beau that the trail vas drawing away from him. It must be nore than two days old now—more than hree. The depth of snow in sheltered laces could not alone account for its lightness.

Now his temperament began to betray ıim, just as Hex had guessed it would. He ıursed his teams still, for that was second ıature. But he would not concede that the ndians could do less than himself. Through torm and a dangerously dropping tempera-ure; up heavy grades and across snow ridges he urged them; and once, where a pring kept the snow soft and Smoke's leg vent through to the calf, he refused to make fire and dry him out straightway, despite ıe chance of frostbite.

"Walk yourself warm, can't you? We'll uild a fire when we camp. Well, what are ou hootin' at? Want us to have fires all long the trail?"

Smoke said no more, and for a little he orgot when, in the strange dumb colourless-ess of a magic-lantern picture a moose ood up, thick-necked and gigantic, against ıe white. Le Beau shot it, and in the low rs and clumps of bushes around greenish nimal-eyes were glinting before the Indians ad hacked away all the coarse, dark meat ley needed. Unconcerned, they left the olves to their feast, but all the evening those es like fire-flies came and went beyond the mp-fire lights.

The huskies, tied each by a stick with a ıong at either end so that they might not ıew themselves loose, answered the far and ear howls generously until Le Beau threw lazing brands and dispersed the eyes. But irginia, looking out from her tent, saw him ıere for long wrapped in his robes and aring at the fire. Smoke had made too big parade over thawing out and rubbing his g with bear's grease. And Virginia knew, s the man did, that an aggrieved Indian may give infinitely more trouble than many packs of wolves.

This was the real reason why when, a few nights later, they saw on a slope across the valley a big Indian camp, Le Beau gave permission for the two to go across for a talk as soon as work was done.

"I'll take the watch till midnight. Mind you're on hand before that," he said.

Smoke said something sullenly in his own tongue, and Virginia saw the policeman swing round on him with raised whip and face blackened by fury. He recollected himself in time, and the two slunk off. But Le Beau stood motionless over the fire—bigger seeming in the dimness than she had realised him yet. Suddenly she felt more afraid of him than she had ever done of her husband—afraid in a subtler, more tragic way. Of what Hex was accused she did not know. But this great embodied Justice with the red flames licking up into the black night behind him—surely the wheel of life had swung full circle that she should now make him suffer after all the suffering that he had caused her.

He turned suddenly, glancing about him with those keen eyes which, like an animal's or an Indian's, could see in the dark. And then, for the first time, he seemed to realise that they were alone, and came slowly over to her, with his fur coat loosened at the throat and the badges of his trade glinting, bleakly cold as his eyes. Despite herself she moved back a little. This brought him up, all standing.

"You're married to Hex, and yet you're still afraid of a man, are you?"

"No. Not afraid."

But she heard her voice shake, and with an abrupt laugh he sat down on the other end of the log, with his hands hanging bare between his knees. The red light ran on them like blood. She wondered if he noticed, and wondered, as she was always doing, from what her husband was flying, with this untiring, implacable man behind him. He spoke at last, not looking at her.

"How much of this is his doing and how much yours I can't give a guess. He has all his senses. But I reckon I'm not capable of understanding how far women who keep their marriage vows under the—under every provocation can go."

"You know nothing about my provocations, nor my possible behaviour under them."

He turned his head slowly, looking below his thick brows. At their first meeting the hint of fire and steel behind her fresh beauty and sweetness had caught him. It was there

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still, then; a finer weapon, probably, for all the tempering it must have had. But her flash struck a like flash from him. She had made his life—that life which had been so pressed down and running over with good joys—emptier than the Barren Lands, and now she was taking from him that last comfort of the defeated—revenge.

"You are upholding his game, then?"

"I know nothing about it."

Still he stared at her. With the icy night held off from her by the roaring fire she seemed, in her loosened furs, like some delicate, fair spirit about to slip from the rough husk of earth. That queer fantastic part of him could feel it—and feel the pain of it.

"Do you want me to tell you?"

"No."

"Ah!" he shrugged. "That's the price a woman pays for being a wife. She knows when she daren't know the truth."

She did not answer. That desire for immolation which had led her to marry Hex that she might turn some of his wealth into charitable channels had upheld her until now. Before ever she saw Le Beau Sangar that day when he came through the flaming glories of the fall she had believed that all she wanted of life was to love and mother the needy. When he left her she clung again, with brave, bruised spirit, to that belief. Now the ache in her heart was daily telling her how piteously weak it was. In the silence the huskies whined and fretted softly. They were too near the wolf not to thrill and quiver to those distant wolf-cries in the forest. Le Beau flung some more wood on the fire. Then he came back.

"We've a couple of weeks yet before we reach Macpherson. It will mean hard going. I can't spare you any."

"Have I asked you to?"

"No." He hesitated, considering the courage of her. She had obeyed her husband, and she would not apologise for nor discuss him. But, because what he had required of her was unfair, she would suffer—as she must be daily suffering in these long runs—without a murmur. "No. You're playing square—now. But I want to say you'd best have kept out of it. This won't do Hex any good when it's told in Court. And it will be told there. I'll get him. I've meant to, one way or another, ever since I knew you'd married him."

She watched the fire. The implacable North was too much in her blood for her not to understand the men of it. Because she had once loved Le Beau Sangar she must not love a lesser man even though he had chosen to leave her. It was like his imperious temper to feel that way. She guessed how his pride, rubbed raw by the talk of every camp-fire and saloon, could not accept it. And she understood, more than many women, how strongly tangled are the great ideals and finite realities which move Nature-taught men.

"Using physical strength for a moral battle," she said at last.

"Moral! For the Lord's sake! The missionaries put in a heap of time trying to salt that in. It's all hot air. The animals have no morals, and they do a sight less harm than we do."

"That's not true. We have to try—most of us do——"

"We don't!" He raised his head, looking at her with those bold, challenging eyes which had stirred her so strongly long ago. "If you'd tried—if you'd been what I thought you—you'd have—you'd have raised me up for your own sake before you so much as let me touch you. That day I was drunk and spoke to you before them all in the Hudson Bay Store. . . . I—I couldn't forgive myself. But next time you saw me I didn't have to ask forgiveness. You kissed me."

"I loved you," she cried in sharp agony. "I *loved* you."

"Never stopped to calculate what you loved, did you? Oh, I've had five years to think about it. Because I was two yards high and one thick, and folk called me Le Beau, it didn't worry you any 'bout how big I was inside. No man will grow up bigger than a woman wants him to. You can stake your last cent on that. But you didn't even aim to have me as big as I'd fixed to be myself. So—I quit."

"I did want you to be big. Oh . . . I did. I dreamt of making you——"

"So you said. Maybe you planned the same with Hex. And maybe you've learnt by now that things can't be done that way."

There was a spark in his eyes as his mind went back over these waste lands of effort and failure.

"Oh, Lord, sometimes when I think of you women! The jobs you're ready to take on! What d'you reckon you know about a man like me? Think you can begin to imagine the half I've known and felt? You couldn't. Guess I was strong enough to lift myself if I'd had a reason. I thought I'd got it when I found you. I hadn't."

"Oh, you're not fair. You expect too much. I tried to understand, to help. And you have—have lifted yourself. . . ."

"Seventy cents a day and my grub as a

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constable in the Mounted Police! Seems to me that five years ago I didn't expect to be—here."

Without those burning eyes his voice would have told her that "here" was a place of despair and bitter waters. She pressed her shut hand against her heart, for the pain in it was a live thing.

"Oh, you hurt—you hurt me so!" she whispered brokenly.

The fur hood hid the bright hair, the lovely throat, and delicate ears that he remembered. It closed in jealously the soft oval of her face. But the dark, flooded eyes under the straight brows and the quiver of the sweet lips were more than enough for any man. Le Beau flung sophistry overboard.

"Virginia! Virginia! Forget it! I'm crazy with loving you still."

She had her hand between them instantly.

"What do you think you love? My face?"

He cursed then, under his breath, and pulled her hand down. His bold, bright eyes were near, and it took all the power in her to meet them unmoved. He was so very human, this man—so weak in the midst of his strength.

"Ah, no," she said softly. "There isn't going to be any of that. I'm dependent on you, and I trust you, you know."

His grip hurt her, and for a moment he did not move. Then, with a faint sigh and a swing of his big shoulders, he got up and went to mend the fire. Before he came back she had gone to her tent, closing the opening; and Le Beau, wrapping his furs closer against the biting cold, sat down with his thoughts to wait the Indians' return.

Long before the dim twilight had gone from the earth next morning Virginia heard the noises of the camp. It took some courage to go out and face this man again, but first sight of him drove off all thought of self. He spoke at once.

"Smoke and Charley didn't come back. They've vamoosed — along with those Indians. Found the pace stiffer than they cared for, maybe."

"That means——?" she faltered.

"Means that he's come across with the live dope again. What else?"

"No, no!" She went crimson. "I never bribed them to go! Oh, I didn't!"

"Haven't accused you, have I?"

"You have! You're doing it now."

He did not answer. For the last hour he had been *cacheing* such things as could be left behind, for they must go now stripped to the essentials. Where the grades were steep, he alone must help the teams. Where trail had to be broken, he alone must break it. The knocking away of his supports always made Le Beau the more tenacious, the more dangerously quiet. He began to take the tent down presently, and she looked up.

"I can do without that."

"Likely neither of us will, if the temperature keeps on dropping. You can drive a team?"

"Of course."

"We'll pull out, then. The dogs can stand a good deal — and they'll have to. You, too."

"I'm not afraid."

The sky was a clear grey, like burnished steel. The air was ice, and the breath froze on hair and furs, and made the strings of dogs into white bears. Not a twig moved. Not a sound came out of the enormous silence of morass and moveless waters and jagged peaks and torn cañons.

The two teams, dwarfed into nothingness by the towering immensity with their own inimate sounds flung back upon them with mysterious echoes, ploughed on over the still visible furrow of the old trail, although in the more exposed places the snow was packed a good seven inches above it.

Virginia drove until she could bear the numbing cold no longer. Then she walked until her limbs failed and she had to take the sled again. Le Beau walked untiringly. He had been tempered to this for long.

And yet he was more than a little anxious when they made camp at night. That steely, shining stillness on the frozen world where nothing moved but themselves; the size and glitter of the stars; the clear, sharp colours of the fire and of the Northern Lights—all threatened greater cold yet.

Virginia's eyes showed alarm when she came out next morning. For all the oil-lamp and the huge fire without there had been prickles of ice in her hair when she woke. And Le Beau, in answer to her first question, did not lessen her fears.

"Seventy below—maybe more. I've been making tests. We have a full hundred degrees of frost right now. Come over here."

He set her close to the roaring bonfire that filled the motionless air with its piney scent and warm colour. He had boiling coffee and damper fried in bacon fat for her, and the huskies came near, curling, nose to brush, about her feet. She smiled, suddenly comforted.

"Oh, this is nice and homey!" she said gratefully.

He stood, looking down at her.

"Ever feel cold like this before? Not? I have—two or three times. I know we'd best

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keep camp to-day. We should dig in and wait till it clouds over. But—Virginia, I want you to tell me now every last thing I need to know about Hex."

She glanced up, whitening. There was no more violence in him than in this still world—and no more weakness. Lying or defiance, even if she had tried, would be useless against the clarity of his trained mind. Knowing it, she waited, silent.

"What's the size of his outfit?" said the policeman.

"Three nine-dog teams and four Indians."

"Been doing any trail-breakin' before he left you?"

"Only in occasional drifts."

"Doesn't walk much since he got that leg broken, does he?"

"No. It's strong. But—but he's been lazy lately."

"Drinking hard, isn't he?"

"Oh . . ." She looked away from the keen face. "Has that anything to do with you?"

"Sure. This cold affects the heart. Unless he's in great condition or can walk enough to keep up his circulation he daren't face it. If he has to keep camp we'll get him yet. He's been drinkin'? Much?"

"Yes."

"He'll keep camp." Le Beau drew a long breath. "And we'll do it—when we have to. Now we'll get along."

"You offered—once—to tell me what he'd done. I want to know now, please. Oh . . . don't look at me like that! Don't! You know I'm square."

His look was hard on her, that impersonal, official look which men dreaded.

"Reckon I do. Why do you want to know?"

"Because—if he has done the thing—why can't you accuse him any time—later?"

He hesitated. Then, in his decision, showed that he understood—was capable of understanding—the true soul of her.

"It's a capital charge, and there's the chance yet that the wrong man'll be hung for it. We won't get Hex hung. He's too big. But we'll put him away for some years if I corral him before he gets home. Otherwise—why, I reckon the other man'll swing. Hex is too clever if you give him time."

He did not look at her, nor wait for her answer. But when the dogs stood in the harness she came to him, speaking firmly.

"No man must suffer for my husband's sin, of course. I'm ready to go on."

"Don't know that I care too much about the other man. Maybe he's a hoodoo, anyway. But I care a lot to get hold of Hex and to save you from something."

"Save me?" He saw the shock and grief in the dark, lovely eyes. "Do you think it'll hurt any the less this way? But we must save the man."

The air seemed tight and quivering as a steel spring when they faced it. The complaint of the snow under the runners grew loud and high as a song, mixing with the low purring of the snow-shoes. Stripped trees like javelins stood up, rank on rank, lost at last in the bleared flatness of unrelieved snow. They followed a creek where weighted young firs bent inward; they rose white heights, where bleak knobs and foreheads of rock gave off more icy breath. A moment's baring of hands or face meant a smiting pain of the flesh that numbed to deadness almost before it could be covered again. Two minutes of rest sent a chill all over the body as the blood dropped back from the surface.

Le Beau, used and toughened to the life, kept the lead easily. But he dared not breathe deep or fast. Men have frozen their lungs in lesser cold than this. Virginia, toiling after, kept behind her teeth the words that would halt him. When she began to fail, and the great strokes of her labouring heart seemed to fill eyes and ears, the man who might die for her husband's sin rose up before her, blotting out that other man.

"I'm coming," she gasped to him. "Oh, I'm coming. I won't give in——"

When she failed, dropping beside the dogs, she did not know it. Le Beau's quick ear heard the change in the droning sled-song. He looked round. And then all was swept from his mind but the immediate sharp necessity for fire. With incredible swiftness he tore grey dry moss-streamers from the trees; collected little dead twigs and broken branches and, above the high-water mark of a creek, double armfuls of driftwood. Hands and feet were numb before he was ready to light the strips of birch-bark from his inner pocket. He had to waste precious moments in beating the life back before he could force his fingers to hold a match. And even then he had to watch and control them, for feeling was gone. The fire, lit with skill, burnt quickly, leapt up into the blaze that meant life. Dragging up the sled he bent and beat the frozen lashings free, tore out robes and hung the snow-filled kettle on the tripod. And now only did he dare turn to Virginia.

Working over her, first with snow and then with heat; forcing drops of hot coffee between her blue lips, and leaving her now and again to tend the fire or to keep the

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necessary glow on his own skin, he learnt that not Hex, not revenge, not his duty meant anything beside this girl whose frail life was fluttering in her like a flame in the wind.

It was for him to repair the wrong which he and Hex had wrought on her. And he would. By God, he would! Hex should hang for this. He should hang.

She breathed easily at last, and he had time to realise that Hex's future was in his hands no longer. And then through that day of wrecked hopes and bitterness he nursed her and fed the fire, and felt these great implacable wastes about him alien for the first time. He had been their son from his beginnings, and now they had betrayed him.

The cold, stealthy hush all about him was affecting him almost as much as the dogs, before the stars blazed out of the sky.

A great grey ghost-owl of the Arctic drifting by made him start, and one husky threw up its muzzle with the wolf-howl. They realised isolation and death, even as the man was doing. And then Virginia, lapped in her furs, with the firelight warm and ruddy on her face, spoke to him.

"Is it night? I haven't been asleep long? Oh, not long, have I?"

"Hush, you don't want to worry. No, lie still. You got to nurse that heart. Lie still, I tell you! D'you think I care what happens to ten thousand men so long as you're safe?"

"I care. I—I must. I can go on——"

His hands came over hers, and his face was very near, the eyes no longer bold and challenging, but with a deep intensity which was harder to meet.

"Virginia, listen. He left you——for me. And I've taken you——for myself. You're mine, mine, all mine. I can't reckon with him now. I guess the Lord A'mighty himself is up against me. But you don't go back to Hex. I swear it. You're mine. I've paid for you, haven't I?"

By his haggard face and the lines the years had put there she knew it, just as she knew that now, in her weakness, she would have to be strong for both.

"Hush! Oh, hush! You know, you insisted once that 'the angels keep their ancient places,' and you——you cast me out because I forgot. We haven't gone through all this to—to sully our love at last, have we?"

"Sully! You're crazy, sweet. It's been sullied long enough by that brute. I won't have it any more. You're mine. Listen: You belong to me. You love me as I love you. I can do with you as I choose——"

"Oh no, you can't, Le Beau Sangar."

"Why do you call me that?" He thrust his arm under the furs, lifting her against him. "You're wanting me to remember what I was when I was first called that? Virginia, I swear to you I've never been drunk since that time in Kamtchatka with Hex. I've never looked at a woman since I left you. I've never gambled. I'm all yours—the whole of me. And you're mine. Listen, love. I don't want to frighten you. But I'm stronger than—I won't give you up now——"

When the fire inflexibly demanded that food whereby only they could live, and he went to get it, Virginia lay still with hands pressed over her eyes. She knew enough of this man to know that if she flung him down now he would never get up again, just as she knew enough of herself to know that she would do it. And yet the touch, the very sight and sound of him had filled her starved heart through these days with such rare sweetness as can only be tasted on the edge of pain.

Into the silence swept suddenly the long, wolf-howl, then high and thin, the distant creak of sled-runners. Le Beau, dragging a great log down the slopes, halted by the trail to stare up the narrow gulch that led on towards Big Portage. On the trail something moved. That keen sight of his recognised a sled with frantic huskies leaping in the traces and halting now and again for breath and to give tongue. There was a man in the sled. Something in the wide stooped figure was familiar, even at this distance. He reached round for his revolver. Then a sobbing voice was in his ear.

"It's Tom. Oh! it's Tom. He's sorry he left me. He's come back for me. Oh, be careful! Oh, don't fight! Please, please."

The sled was nearer. Le Beau did not move. The revolver was in his hand now. One shot, and he knew where to put it. There should be no mistake.

The huskies, scenting fire, swerved from the trail and headed, floundering, through the snow into the firelight, shivering and whimpering their way to the very feet of the man, as though imploring protection.

From the sled the other man looked out on the two with grinning teeth and set eyes and a white, frost-bitten face in an icy trap of frost-tipped, black beard.

That buccaneer heart of Tom Hex's had never failed before danger. But the cold of uttermost space had laid a finger on it, and the terror which had turned the huskies and sent them maddened down the trail they knew was that most menacing terror of the wild—the smell of Death.

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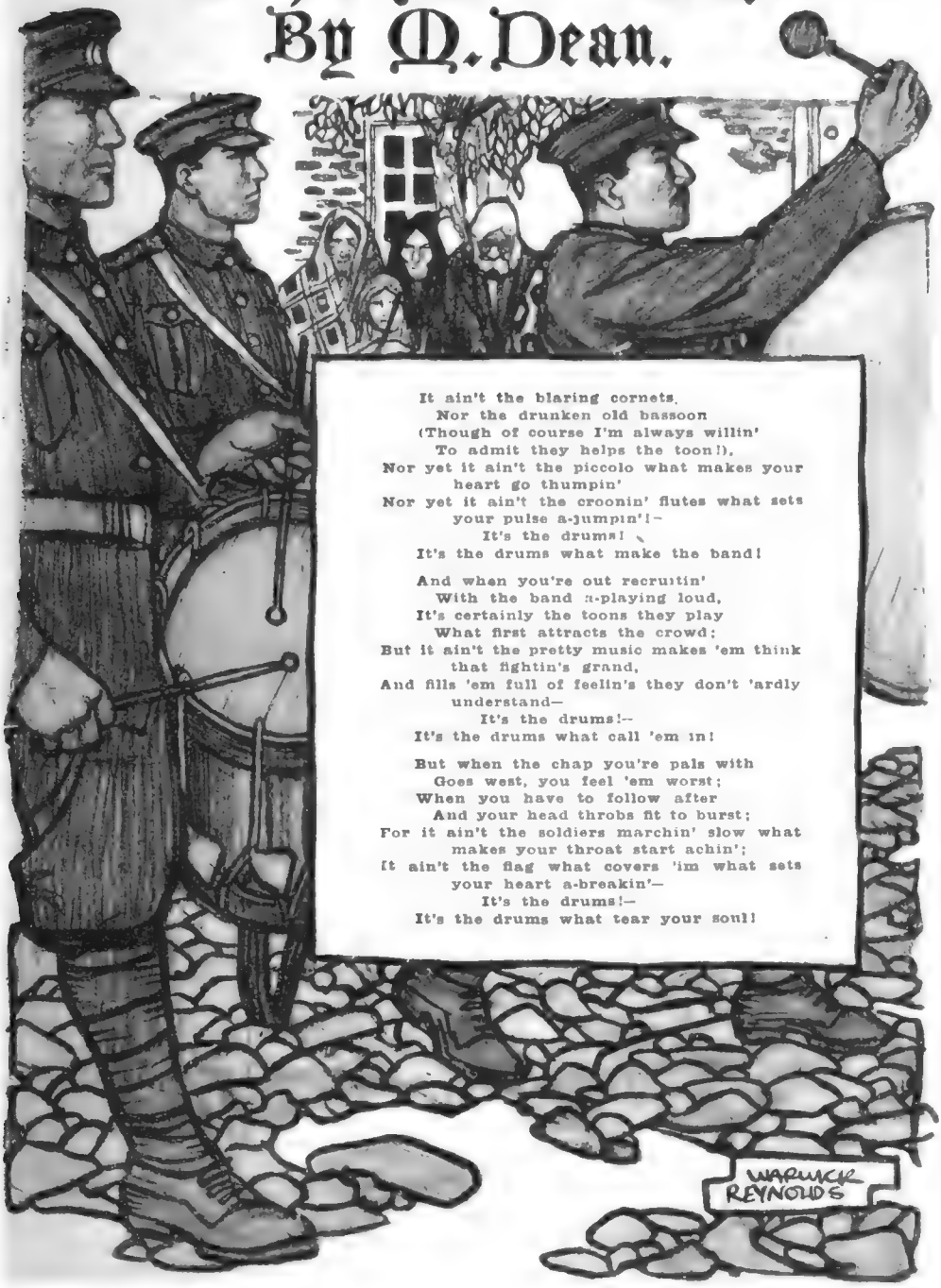
Armistice Day: November 11th, 1918.

The Drums

By M. Dean.



It ain't the blaring cornets,
Nor the drunken old bassoon
(Though of course I'm always willin'
To admit they helps the toon!),
Nor yet it ain't the piccolo what makes your
heart go thumpin'
Nor yet it ain't the croonin' flutes what sets
your pulse a-jumpin'!—
It's the drums!
It's the drums what make the band!

And when you're out recruitin'
With the band a-playing loud,
It's certainly the toons they play
What first attracts the crowd;
But it ain't the pretty music makes 'em think
that fightin's grand,
And fills 'em full of feelin's they don't 'ardly
understand—
It's the drums!—
It's the drums what call 'em in!

But when the chap you're pals with
Goes west, you feel 'em worst;
When you have to follow after
And your head throbs fit to burst;
For it ain't the soldiers marchin' slow what
makes your throat start achin';
It ain't the flag what covers 'im what sets
your heart a-breakin'—
It's the drums!—
It's the drums what tear your soul!

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Old as the Hills.

By Rex Colvile.

Illustrated by Treyer Evans.

Timothy Bryce craned his neck in an attempt to look through the open French window; he had to crane his neck because Mabyn's arm was round it. His attitude suggested a mild old collie straining apologetically at a velvet leash.

"They—they're waiting for you, Mabyn," he said rather chokingly. "It—it's not polite to keep guests waiting."

The butterfly-girl settled herself more securely on his chair-arm; she seemed, indeed, to fold her wings.

"Let 'em wait," she said. "They're not *my* guests, you know, Tim."

He cleared his throat—leashes, however velvety, have a constricting effect. Her hand slid upward from his neck and began four-finger exercises on the crown of his head, where there was no hair-apparent.

"Mabyn," he said weightily, "I have invited these three young men here this afternoon for the sole purpose of playing tennis with you."

"I hate young men," said Mabyn dreamily.

". . . because you said you wanted a good game and hated playing pat-ball. Quite ten minutes ago you told them you'd be out in a second and—please stop that tattooing on my head, Mabyn. I don't like it."

She got off the chair-arm and stood in front of him—a radiant, dazzling figure, Panama, jumper, skirt, stockings, shoes—all as white as snow in Salmon. Timothy Bryce kept his eyes on the shoes. He had got into the way of looking as little as possible at her face, and never into her eyes.

"I think you are awfully unkind, Tim," she murmured brokenly. "Ever since I arrived three weeks ago you have surrounded me with young men. It looks——" here she made a small throat noise that may have been a sob—"it looks as though you didn't want to—to look after me yourself."

He grunted dissent, but did not meet her wistful glance. She made a gesture as though to dash a diamond drop from her eyes.

"Poor darling Daddy left me in *your* care, you know—not in the care of hundreds of wild, harum-scarum young men."

Still he did not look up; so, with the tiniest effort, she cast pathos from her.

"I feel a perfect frump," she said brightly. "Do I look a perfect frump, Tim dear?"

He smiled uneasily and shook his head; his eyes travelled quickly up as far as the wraith of a cleft in her chin, then dropped again to her shoes.

"Ask any of those three young men out there," he said. "*They'll* tell you."

"*You* tell me, Tim," she pleaded, lifting her tennis racquet and regarding him through the mesh.

He rose quickly from his chair and walked to the open window. She pulled a rude face at his back.

"I thought, Mabyn," he said primly, "that we agreed that you should call me Guardian; it—it is more—er—seemly and more in keeping with—er—our respective positions."

"Skittles!" said Mabyn. "You don't call me Ward. And if I don't call you Tim, I shall have to call you by some pet-name—Punkiedoodle-Pieface or something. You wouldn't like to be called Punkiedoodle-Pieface, would you, Tim dear?"

"Certainly not." He stepped out through the window. "Here she is!" he called.

Instantly three beaming, eager, athletic youths responded to his call. Mabyn looked at them, frankly surprised. They looked at Mabyn, frankly enchanted.

"Oh! Are you ready?" she asked.

They assured her that this was undoubtedly so.

"And here I've been waiting all this time for you," she reproached them. "Well, better late than never. Come along."

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Timothy watched them move across the lawn; he was frowning, but there was an odd sort of a yearning smile twisting his mouth. When Mabyn turned at the lawn-edge and waved her racquet to him the frown remained but the smile did not. He went quickly back into his study; now she was out of it, it seemed a dismal cave.

He dropped moodily into his chair. His agonised eye wandered to the bookcase, in the top shelf of which—green and gold literary milestones of the past fifteen years—there dwelt some seventeen volumes by one, Timothy Bryce. Infallibly his eye sought out the three novels which had dealt, in the most graceful, captivating way, with the ancient theme of guardian and ward—"Laggard Love," "October and April," and the latest and best seller, "On Trust." Upon the last of

The butterfly-girl settled herself more securely on his chair-arm. . . . Her hand slid upward from his neck and began four-finger exercises on the crown of his head.

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these his quailing eye rested in a species of conscience-stricken terror. His three chickens had come home to roost; in fact, "On Trust" had, a minute ago, been roosting upon his very chair-arm.

Timothy groaned. Into his quiet, well-ordered, dilettante life had suddenly been projected the very situation which he—with so much pecuniary benefit to himself and so many demands for his autograph from hectic ladies of tender years—had imagined as the plot for "On Trust." As old as the hills, of course! Through twenty delicate, dainty chapters the middle-aged guardian had strenuously combated the love for his ward—that love which, in Chapter III. (in spite of the combat), had begun to creep, in VI. was upright on its sturdy legs, in VIII. was toddling strongly, in X. was walking with firm steps, and thence to the end of the book was either in full swing or being knocked down until—well, until the eyes of the hectic ladies were brimming over and they put down the book with a heavy sigh of happy repletion.

"Confound it!" moaned Timothy. "I will *not* plagiarise my own accursed tripe." Jumping from his chair, he went to the French window. From the tennis court came the clear call of Mabyn: "Love. . . . Forty." Timothy reeled. It sounded like the voice of Fate. *He* was forty!

From the bookcase there glittered balefully at him the two words stamped in bold gilt: "On Trust."

II.

Timothy went towards the tennis court strenuously determined to be as unlike the middle-aged guardian-hero of "the best seller" as it was well-nigh possible to be. This wretched fictional ass had had a cynical smile—a trifle disturbing but awfully tender when you understood it—and a dreamy, moody expression in his queer, short-sighted eyes; he had also a marvellously erect, well-balanced figure of the Greek-god persuasion. In order to emphasise his complete dissimilarity to this hero of "On Trust," Timothy schooled his mouth into the grimmest lines and opened his eyes so wide—with intent to appear severely practical and acutely observant—that he conveyed the impression of being uncomfortably startled.

A set had just finished when he reached the court. Mabyn, ignoring her partner and their late adversaries, flew towards him with the most touching anxiety depicted on her fairy-flower face.

"Oh, Tim darling," she cried, "are you ill?"

"I am not," said Timothy sulkily.

"But you have a pain somewhere. Your eyes are goggling and your lips are drawn down as though you couldn't bear it."

"Thank you, Mabyn, I am in excellent health."

Mabyn turned to the three young men. One good turn deserves another; they responded eagerly.

"I am awfully sorry to have to ask you to go now—quite quietly," she said in a hushed, awed voice. "Mr. Bryce is far from well."

They looked at Timothy resentfully. They had hoped for tea; and after tea more tennis; and, after more tennis, the departure of the other two of them.

"Nonsense!" growled Timothy; "I'm all right."

Mabyn put a finger to her lips and tiptoed towards the house. The three young men hastened after her, throwing Timothy scowling glances over their shoulders. Timothy watched them go in a sort of angry trance. He heard Mabyn say in a sick-room voice: "I am very worried about him—he is such a queer shape." Then presently he heard her call "Good-bye!" to them, and a triple subdued response from the direction of the drive. He shivered in the hot sunlight. In another minute she had joined him.

"Oh, Tim, you *are* naughty!" she said, with a bewildering smile of mock reproach.

"Naughty?" he echoed miserably. "Me? Naughty?"

"Naughty, but awfully clever. It was *just* what I wanted."

She slipped her arm into his and gave it a confiding squeeze.

"And *you* wanted it, too, Tim dear, didn't you? Just a little bit—a teeny weeny bit?"

Timothy dragged his arm away. He had a dreadful misgiving that a romantic, dreamy "On Trust" expression was slithering into his eyes.

"Wanted what?" he asked roughly.

"Them to go. And so you pretended to be ill. Oh, Tim, I'm ashamed—and very, very proud—of you! Come on in; we'll have a jolly, cosy tea—just we two. Won't it be ripping?"

"No," said Timothy, following her into the house.

They had tea in the study; Mabyn insisted. The three homing chickens, roosting in the bookcase, watched Timothy as he accepted a cup of tea and a very buttery bit of tea-cake. "On Trust" had an exceptionally broody look.

"Those poor young men!" laughed Mabyn, putting her elbows on the table and holding her cup, very vulgarly and

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attractively, in both hands while she sipped. "How they *did* hate going!"

Timothy swallowed the buttery bit, and, leaning forward from his armchair, took another gravely.

"It was too bad of you, Mabyn," he said sternly. "It wasn't hospitable. Why, this very tea-cake was intended for them—one of them. Don't you—er—don't you *like* young men?"

She shook her head, smiling provocatively.

Timothy, staring defiantly across at the broody "On Trust," squared his shoulders and jerked up his chin; he would *not* be intimidated by the accursed tripe. "Hasn't it ever occurred to you, my child," he asked with paternal bluntness, "that some day—perhaps quite soon—you will marry?"

She put down her cup carefully. Her face was radiant.

"Oh, Tim!" she breathed.

His collar suddenly became unbearably tight. He bit savagely at his saucer, momentarily mistaking it for the second buttery bit.

"Those three young men——" he began hurriedly.

"All three?" she asked, amazed and noticeably shocked.

"Any *one* of them," he explained meticulously, "would be a very suitable—er—match for—for a——"

"Penniless girl?" Humility itself was in Mabyn's voice. She drooped forlornly over a chocolate *éclair*.

He could not bear it. The pathos, the heart-breaking way she trifled with the *éclair*, the child-like candour of her——

"You won't be penniless, my dear," he said earnestly; "*I'll* see to that. Why, I owe it to you. Every penny I've made by the sale of—of those things"—and he gesticulated toward the three roosters and their companions in the bookcase—"I owe to your father. Every penny. He——"

She got up with her teacup and another *éclair*. Skilfully guiding a hassock with her foot to Timothy's chair, she lowered herself gingerly upon it and, resting her back against his knees:

"Go on, Tim," she said softly.

He forced his knees to a rock-like rigidity and his voice to an acrid dryness; yet even as he did these things he was aware that they were exactly what the guardian in "On Trust" was in the habit of doing when the atmosphere became dangerously emotional.

"When I was quite a young man," he continued, "your father encouraged me with kindly criticism and disciplined enthusiasm to persist in my—er—efforts at fiction-writing. That is all I mean, Mabyn."

She put down her cup, wiped her sticky fingers on the carpet, and leant back her head against his unresponsive knees.

"Daddy often used to talk about you—out there in New Zealand," she said softly. "How old was I when Daddy and I left England?"

"Three," said Timothy, his hand wavering over the shimmering cloud of her head and returning abruptly to his side.

"And that was fifteen years ago. Tim, dear, what was I like as a baby? Pretty?"

His hand gave a jerk forward, but he jerked it back again. The guardian in "On Trust" had not been the same man after letting his hand rest for a moment upon his ward's head.

"You were what I should call a presentable infant," he admitted cautiously.

She sighed. "Daddy used to say that you couldn't keep away from our house when I was a tiny tot. He said you used to turn up every evening just in time to see me having my ba——"

"—ottle," said Timothy hastily. "Yes, yes. It—it was not—er—uninteresting."

She pressed her head significantly against his knees. He set his teeth.

"And," she went on, "that just before we went to New Zealand I made you promise to marry me. Did I, Tim? And what did you say?"

He laughed harshly. "No doubt I said yes," he answered. "I—I used to spoil you dreadfully."

She chuckled—a complacent, self-communing little chuckle. One of Timothy's knees quivered uneasily.

"Tim," she said—and broke off suddenly. Away in the distance in the direction of the deserted tennis court there sounded a long, low whistle with a skittish upward tilt at the end of it. Mabyn got slowly, lazily to her feet, as though to imply that the whistle had nothing whatever to do with her movement. But this elaborate carefulness was wasted upon Timothy; the whistle had held no significance for him. He was in far too chaotic a state of mind to attend to whistles, however skittish a final note they might contain.

"I think," said Mabyn doubtfully, "I'll go for a wee stroll in the garden, Tim."

He nodded, and she sauntered out by the French window. Instantly he buried his face in his hands, a prey to the deepest dejection. There was no help for it—he must leave the house, leave it immediately. A few more conversations of the type in which he had just taken part would infallibly land him quivering at the altar; it was inevitable. If

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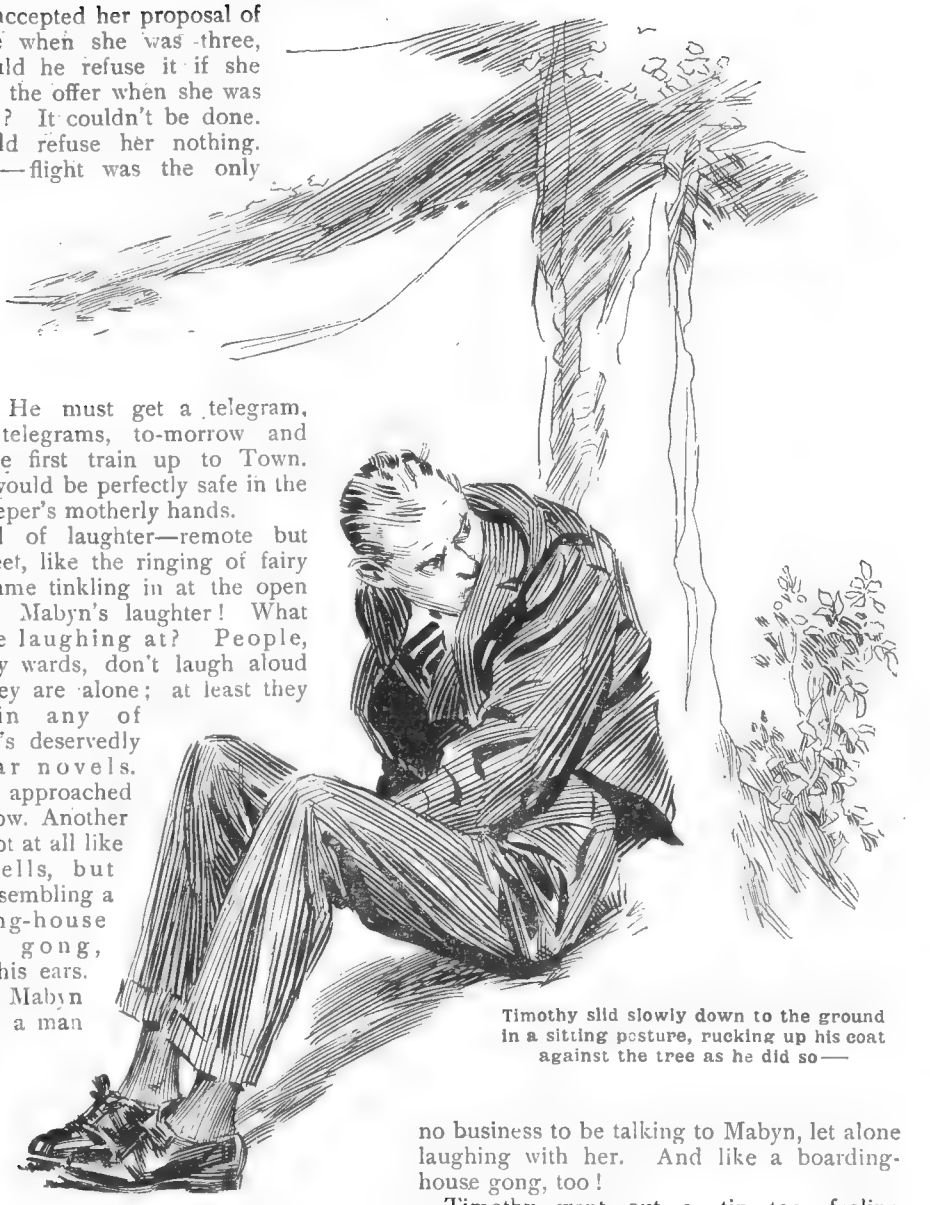
e had accepted her proposal of
narriage when she was three,
ow could he refuse it if she
epeated the offer when she was
ighteen? It couldn't be done.
He could refuse her nothing.
No, no—flight was the only



Timothy slid slowly down to the ground in a sitting posture, rucking up his coat against the tree as he did so—

ourse. He must get a telegram,
everal telegrams, to-morrow and
atch the first train up to Town.
Mabyn would be perfectly safe in the
ousekeeper's motherly hands.

A trill of laughter—remote but
ery sweet, like the ringing of fairy
ells—came tinkling in at the open
indow. Mabyn's laughter! What
as she laughing at? People,
specially wards, don't laugh aloud
hen they are alone; at least they
on't in any of
imothy's deservedly
opular novels.
imothy approached
ie window. Another
ugh, not at all like
airy bells, but
ather resembling a
oarding-house
inner gong,
rected his ears.
man! Mabyn
as with a man

– some man—and they were laughing
ogether!

Timothy rubbed his chin. Ought he—
as it his province, the guardian's province,
o inquire into this? Perhaps the man who
ad made Mabyn laugh so alluringly (con-
ound him!) was one of the three em nently
uitable young men who had had no tea and
ery little fun and had secretly returned for
ie latter. If so—well, all right, of course.
ut p'raps it wasn't. P'raps it was a markedly
nsuitable young man who had *had* tea, or
omething far, far stronger than tea, and had
no business to be talking to Mabyn, let alone laughing with her. And like a boarding-house gong, too!

Timothy went out a tip-toe, feeling humiliatingly boy-scoutish. Lurking privily behind the mulberry tree he peered towards the tennis lawn. The gong-voiced man was a complete stranger—a well-set-up, youngish man, with a little dark moustache and a big idea of himself. A complete stranger, trespassing on the tennis lawn and talking to Mabyn with his hands in his pockets! What the deuce did the fellow mean by it?

Great Heavens! Mabyn had taken this complete stranger by the elbow and, to judge by the youngish man's expression of unrest, was wiggling his funny-bone!

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— Simultaneously Mabyn screamed. . . . "There he is! There's Tim! There's my guardian! Look!"

Timothy whipped out his handkerchief and mopped his brow.

"You oughtn't to have come," Mabyn was saying seductively. "You know quite well you oughtn't to have come, Tommy."

"Had to," said the youngish man laconically, jerking away his tortured elbow and seizing her hand.

"But—but supposing my guardian were to see us! Why, he'd have a fit. Lots of fits. Fit after fit."

"Let him," said the youngish man.

Timothy, leaning weakly against the mulberry tree, was evincing unmistakable signs of availing himself of the youngish man's permission. He looked, at any rate, far from normal.

"But," demurred Mabyn, "he's such a dear."

"Well, if it comes to that, so am I."

"Ye—es. But a different sort of a dear."

"Ra—*ther*!"

Timothy slid slowly down to the ground in a sitting posture, rucking up his coat against the tree as he did so. He reached the earth with a flaccid bump; his coat seemed to be now all collar. Simultaneously Mabyn screamed—not a real mouse-induced scream, but the sort of tuneful gasp emitted by musical-comedy heroines when the rustic heroes turn out to be Earls after all.

"Oh!" she cried, hiding most of her face but her eyes with outspread hands. "There he is! There's Tim! There's my guardian! Look! Sitting down under the mulberry tree, wearing his coat like a boa! Run, Tommy, run! Fly, fly!"

But, even if the youngish man had intended to obey, he was frustrated by Timothy, who, on his hands and knees, in the act of rising not very gracefully, cried "Stop!" and scrambled to his feet.

"Oh," sobbed Mabyn, hanging her head, "too late, too late!"

Timothy, obviously suffering from nerve strain, emerged upon the lawn.

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"Who is this, Mabyn?" he asked coldly but huskily.

"A man," faltered Mabyn. "Only a man, Tim, dear. Just a man."

"What man?"

"Well, his name is Harding—Mr. Thomas Harding."

"And who may Mr. Harding be?"

"He—he came over in the same boat. I—I knew him slightly in New Zealand. He—he's a married man."

Timothy swayed like a sapling in a storm. Chapter XVII. of "On Trust" seemed to cover the distance between the tennis lawn and the bookcase in one sinister leap, clutch him by the shoulders with its sticky, sentimental hands, and shake him until his teeth rattled like dice: chapter XVII. (the young ladies' favourite chapter!), wherein the fictional guardian had discovered the terrible fact that a married man of notorious reputation had been making love to his ward, and had, on the instant (chivalrous fellow!) determined that duty demanded that he—the guardian—should declare himself forthwith.

"But," continued Mabyn in extenuation, "he—he has been separated from her."

"For three years," said the youngish man grimly.

Timothy made vague, fluttering gestures. The situation was overwhelming.

"Don't be angry, please, Tim," implored Mabyn.

Timothy gulped. Already he fancied he could hear the distant strains of the Wedding March; already he could almost smell the sickly scent of the inevitable gardenia in the button-hole of his skin-tight morning-coat; already his face seemed to sting from the impact of hurtling confetti.

"I—I am not angry with *you*, Mabyn," he choked, "but——" And here he shot a homicidal glance at the youngish man.

"Oh, and not with him either," cried Mabyn piteously. "You've no idea how helpful he was on the voyage coming over. He was u—u—u— What is that long curly word? U—?"

"—biquitous," snarled Timothy.

"—biquitous," agreed Mabyn gratefully. "I couldn't stir without him. If I leant over the rail, he leant over too, and held me so that I shouldn't fall over. If I sat on my deck-chair, he propped his up against mine so that it shouldn't fall down. If it was awfully windy, he held my hat on for me so that it shouldn't fall off; and when, sometimes, I contradicted him he never answered back so that we shouldn't fall out."

"Bah!" croaked Timothy.

"And," continued Mabyn softly, "when—when I was ill he was so tender and gentle and practical that, really, he couldn't have been sweeter even if he'd been a single man."

Timothy glared at the youngish man.

"Cad!" he said briefly. "Go back to your wife."

"I have," said the youngish man.

"Have? Have what?"

"Gone back to her. Own up, Mabs; the rag's over."

III.

They were walking slowly back to the house, arm in arm. Timothy was the middle man.

"You see, darling Tim," Mabyn was explaining, "dear Daddy made his will nearly four years ago, and though Tommy and I were married six months before he died he never altered it. You know how forgetful he was, the poor old dear. So, when Tommy and I landed in England, and he found that there was a lot of stupid business he must attend to in London, I had the inspiration of becoming your ward for a few weeks. I knew you'd like it, and I thought that probably I should too. And I have."

"Not fair on you, of course, sir," said Tommy, grinning, "but——"

"Ha, ha," laughed Timothy constrainedly. "Ha, ha! Mabyn, you young monkey, you took me in completely. Why—why, do you know what I was on the very brink of doing? Do you? You'll never guess."

Mabyn hugged his arm.

"Tommy read "On Trust" aloud to me on the boat," she said.

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Sub-Editing Stars.

By
M. Owston-Booth.

Once upon a time the film-cutter was only a mechanic; to-day he has to be an artist as well. The following article describes his multifarious duties, and helps you to realise what a very strong claim he has to be called the "Movie Magician!"

If Marguerite Clarke's hat tips askew it rests with the film-cutter to remedy matters by cutting out the piece of film in which her appearance is libelled.

THERE was once a popular screen star who jumped from a window in a white dress and landed in the garden a few feet below in complete riding habiliments.

The incident became notorious, though it was only one of numerous such misadventures—mostly less obtrusive, I must admit—that happened in those early days of the movies. People blamed the producer and laughed at the star, whilst the real culprit, who had cut and assembled the film, hid behind public ignorance of his existence.

But after that movie-makers became particular about the people they employed to put the film in shape. It wasn't difficult to make mistakes, as they discovered for themselves when they looked into the apparently easy task of cutting up the celluloid and sticking the scenes together in their proper sequence. To control thousands of feet of wilful, twirling film, cut about into minute sections, is to experience a more awful nightmare than

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could ever intrude itself upon one s nightly slumber.

It seems a pity that they can't photograph the scenes in the order they screen them. Yet I do not believe it has ever been done. The producer of *On With the Dance!* Mae Murray's first Paramount picture, recently went into statistics which revealed that this production would have taken seventeen times as long and cost one hundred times as much to produce had the story been filmed

It is up to the Movie Magician to make the most of such pretty poses as those of Mildred June and——

just as it was written and as it appears on the screen. For instance, the lavish, crowded café scenes in which Miss Murray appears as a dancer would have had to be staged for a few minutes' work every day for three weeks at a stretch, instead of for the mere couple of days during which the café scenes were filmed one after another regardless of the sequence in which they would be shown on the screen.

The statistics for *On With the Dance!*

——Mabel Julienne Scott, even if it means interpolating a long stretch of film into the photo-play in order to do it.

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Mae Murray admits frankly that the film-cutter could mar her reputation or the reputation of any other star in the movies.

are mild, for the action of the story was pretty straightforward. In the case of a picture in which the hero in Alaska and the heroine in New York are alternately depicted throughout four of the five reels of drama, it would be necessary for the producer and his company to take out season tickets on the railway and travel to and fro as the scenario demanded.

Every scene bears a number according to its place in the story. Before the "shooting" of each piece of action takes place the producer's assistant holds up a slate from which the number is recorded by the camera. This number is deleted, of course, when the film is cut and put into shape. So far the assembling is mechanical—and so far, with certain mishaps, the mechanical film-cutter used to do his work.

But this side of the business has developed as much as any other during the past few years, and to-day the film-cutter is an artist, a Movie Magician who can do more astounding things with the stars than a circus proprietor can do with his company. He could make Mary Pickford run into a scene backwards, or Charles Ray walk head-down with his feet adhering to the ceiling like those of a fly. He could make Dorothy Gish pass through a door and appear as Richard Barthelmess on the other side.

But in his hands lies also some of the making of reputations. The film that comes into his hands is just the raw material of a photo-play, often measuring fifteen thousand feet of film instead of the five thousand required in the finished photo-play. The same scene may be filmed over and over again in the producer's determination to get the best possible work out of his company, and it is up to the cutter to choose the finest piece of action and relegate the remainder to the scrap-heap.

A firelight scene like this of Betty Compson and her dog must be tinted red. This is part of the work of the film-cutter who—

—also selects the most attractive love scenes, and occasionally has emotional close-ups, like that of Thomas Meighan and Bebe Daniels in *Why Change Your Wife?* specially taken.

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The Man Who Had No Equal.

By J. C. Howard.

Illustrated by Warwick Reynolds.

HAVE been an unpractical, dreamy fellow ll my life. I realised it myself at an early ge. Perhaps there was something wrong ith the nurses and teachers who did not eize upon the fault and either correct it or rrange my life for me in an ordered way. I hrifted, or at least I would have done had it ıot been for Jim. To think you should ome to look at me like that. Your last ook, Jim!

The first time he looked at me was in a Hampstead garden. We had moved into he house next door to him, and I moped bout in the ill-kept garden, until one day im climbed the wall, and my world began. t is not too much to say that Jim made ıappy for me a lonely childhood; that I pent eight or nine happy years at school ecause of him; that he was my friend, my ponsor, my protector, my idol; nay, my. xistence itself.

Jim's influence over me began with our first ieeting. As I said, he climbed the wall, a oy of eight or so, strong, healthy, brisk, ith a close-cropped head of black hair; atless, bronzed like a gipsy; in a torn and ilapidated Norfolk suit of grey; boots and nickers mud-stained, and bare knees black s wet earth could make them.

"Hello, Cocky!" said Jim, as he jumped own. I attempted to shake hands.

"Go on," said Jim mockingly. "No arks." I eyed him wistfully, while he took ıe in slowly. He saw, as I remember it, a ıtle, even puny, boy of seven in a carefully ressed and spotless sailor suit with a wide, hite linen sailor collar, also speckless. My air hung in golden curls to my neck, and I ıust have looked sheepish and confused.

"You great girl, you!" he commented at ıst. And, looking around him: "This isn't ıuch of a garden."

We stared at one another.

"Can you play cricket?" came suddenly. I said I had never tried. There was a worried expression in Jim's eyes. He was evidently concerned about me.

"Look here," he said earnestly, "you'll have to be careful, you know."

"Careful? Why, what about?"

"Well, you know, this is a nice neighbourhood—at least my father says it is—and you can't go about like that and say you've never tried to play cricket. Why, there's ten boys in this road who'd lick you as soon as knife for less than that. What's your name?"

"Harry."

"Harry what?"

"Harry Beamish."

"Well, your name's Beamish, then. Only girls call each other pet names. What's your father?"

"My father is Professor Beamish, at the Victoria and Albert Museum."

"Huh!" commented Jim, "I'm Corrance, Jim Corrance, and my father is the biggest mining engineer in all Africa. Come over the wall."

And, in spite of the fact that I was forbidden to go out of the garden, and that the height of the wall terrified me, I just went with him.

Jim showed me how to climb a tree near the wall, how to swarm out on a branch that over-topped it, how to grip the coping on the other side.

"I'm going to bowl to you," said he. "You bat."

Now, I had seen boys on the common play cricket, and I took up what I thought was the right attitude. Jim laughed, and laughed, till he rolled on the grass in pain.

"You've got the wrong side of your bat and you can't play in *that*." "That" was my sailor blouse and collar. "Come on," cried Jim. "Strip." His muddy hands wrenched off my linen and my blouse, and left to view —red flannel things with whalebone supports such as my nurses made me wear.

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"Stays!" said Jim. "Stays!" and his mocking laughter made me burn with shame. He simply shrieked. "Does," he asked at length, "does your mother—does she lace them for you?"

"My mother is dead."

And my gallant Jim—at eight—hung his head.

"I'm sorry, Beamish," he said; and after a pause: "But who looks after you?" I told him Ellen, my nurse, or Sarah, the housemaid. And Jim reflected sadly, passing a cricket ball from hand to hand.

"What's your father do about it?" he asked suddenly.

"I, I—don't see him often."

"When is he at home?"

"Late in the evenings."

"Well, I'll tell you what, Beamish, we'll have to see him. You can't go on like this."

I waited till he spoke again.

"Haven't you," he hazarded, "haven't you any other things but those?"

"I have three other suits," I returned hotly and a little proudly.

"All like that?"

"Why yes, nearly."

"Crikey, you are funny," concluded Jim. "Come and see Mummy." And he took me to that dear lady who had such a wonderful influence on my life, so inexpressibly dear to me from that first instant, whom I can never, never face now. I had resumed my sailor blouse and my collar, a little crumpled and no longer speckless.

"Look, Mummy!" cried Jim, rushing up the steps to her, "this is young Beamish from next door. Look! That's how they dress him, and he's never played cricket, and he *wears stays*. Mummy! What ought we to do with him? Could he live here till we get him a suit?"

Mrs. Corrance shook hands with me gravely.

"You had better both have some tea and we'll see, Jim. You mustn't be rude."

"I'm not rude, Mummy, but it's awful to see a boy like that, isn't it?"

"Why no, dear, of course not. But never mind now. Go and wash your hands, both of you, and come down to tea."

That was the very first time I ever washed my hands unaided, but it speaks volumes for Jim's influence that I did it without hesitation.

And in a little sitting-room downstairs Mrs. Corrance talked and questioned. I see now she must have had tea specially served in there instead of in her beautiful drawing-room. She knew small boys even then, and wanted us to be at ease. She asked me about my mother whom I just remembered and my father whom I hardly ever saw. And I told her of Ellen and Sarah, the housemaid, and Sarah's young man, Bob Ellis—"quite the gentleman"—who had recommended the stays, 'cause, he said, "kids' innards never was strong, and he could do with holdin' up." And the upshot of it was that Jim lent me a flannel cricket-shirt and a belt, "until he goes home," said Mrs. Corrance, and we retired to the garden, where Jim gave me my first notions of cricket.

That first wonderful afternoon showed me the difference between under-arm and over-arm bowling. I heard of "daisy-cutters" and "leg-breaks," and learnt to call a bat "a willow."

And I went home, by the front door this time, re-adorned in my own clothes, to the astonishment of my nurse who answered the bell.

But this surprising and eventful day was not to end here. I was awakened from my bed and taken to my father's study by an astonished and wild-eyed Ellen. I had been but once in that study before, though I had often peeped through the door when opened, and seen my father, with his big brown beard, at his desk, writing, or opening and shutting heavy books. He was at his desk now, and they put me, wrapped in a blanket, in a leather arm-chair near him. And then I saw——. Mrs. Corrance and Jim were there too.

My father spoke first, looking at me kindly, I think a little sadly.

"It seems, Harry," he said, "that you have made a friend to-day, Mr.—er, Mr.—" he looked at a card—"Mr.—er—Corrance, who says that——" He straightened himself and went on: "Or rather you seem to have made *two* good friends. Mr. Corrance's mother has been talking to me. But Mr. Corrance himself is, I believe, your ambassador. What—er—what was it exactly that you were saying, my boy?"

I saw Jim jump bravely to his feet, and knew that his left hand, behind him, was in his mother's right. I heard her whisper "Now, Jim!" And Jim began:

"You know——"

"Sir," whispered Jim's mother.

"You know, sir," he piped gallantly, "you know I have looked over the wall at young Beamish for a week. He isn't like a boy at all. He's a girl. They treat him like a baby and dress him up, and he *wears stays*, and he doesn't know how to play, and —and—I wanted to tell you about it, sir."

"H'm," said my father, and turned to me. "Are you—are you unhappy, Harry?"

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"Why, no, Father. Only Jim laughed at my c-clothes, and I think he's r r-right."

"H'm," said my father, and rang the bell. To Ellen, who answered precipitately—probably listening outside the door, I thought—he ordered abruptly: "Bring this boy's clothes."

"Clothes, sir?"

"Yes, clothes, girl. All of them."

She brought them: my fresh little sailor suit, my linen collar, my pitiful stays, even to my stockings with three large holes in their calf and heels.

"H'm," said my father, and turned them over with a long ruler from his desk.

"So you think," he queried, addressing Mrs. Corrance, "that——"

She smiled. "Jim does," she said.

"Jim's right," declared my father. "These," he declared, fingering my stays—"these are hardly masculine enough, I'll admit. And I think—er—a hair-cut, eh?"

Jim nodded emphatically.

My father took a book of cheques from a pigeon-hole and wrote in it. Then he stood up.

"Mrs. Corrance, I'm most infinitely obliged to you, and to this little gentleman here I am deeply grateful." He coughed awkwardly. "Would you? Could you take him some time and buy him what—er—what he ought to have? His mother is, as you know, in another world, and I——"

And that sweet lady rose quickly and clasped his hand, and crumpled the cheque, and very, very nearly burst into tears.

"To-morrow," she said—"to-morrow afternoon." My father looked pitifully at my clothes in the chair.

"Say good-bye to them, Harry, boy."

"But he'll have to wear them to go out."

"Of course," said my father absently.

But he was smiling at Jim.

"Have you ever seen a big bonfire, Corrance?" he asked.

Jim smiled reassuringly.

"We'll have one," declared my father, "with these, eh?"

So that the following day I went in a cab to get a Norfolk suit or two like Jim's, and a cricket belt, and some flannel shirts, and a whole entire cricket bag with bat and ball and pads, and a catapult, and a steam-engine that made real steam, and such a quantity of other things.

And that night Jim and I lit a fire at the bottom of our garden, and Jim let off "Chinese crackers" and set fire to "pin wheels" and "jumpers." And we blackened our faces and danced round the fire till at last my father and Mrs. Corrance joined us, and put my tiny sailor clothes in the heat of the blaze and we danced all together a wild, mad war-song around the roaring fire under Jim's directing inspiration.

The next few years of my life I lived more in the Corrances' house than in ours. I went for long weeks in the summer to the sea with Jim and his mother. Jim's father was nearly always away, in Africa, but he came home once or twice and chummed with my father, and I remember them walking, talking, smoking their pipes and cigars together, and one glorious summer on the Welsh coast, they took Jim and me out fishing day after day, and we got wet to the skin, and nearly swamped, and all four of us were happy.

And then Jimmy went away to school. I was to follow in a year's time.

"You'll have to look out young Beamish," he reported, when he came home for the Christmas holidays. "They're an awfully particular set of chaps. But I'll put you up to a wrinkle or two."

I noticed he wore his Eton collar *inside* his jacket. He put my collar inside, and explained that all the chaps wore it like that now, so of course I had to.

And, as I said before, he was my pioneer always. When I went to Fellsall in my turn, he was my guide and friend. He fought my battles, coached me at footer, trained me for the junior quarter-mile, ragged me, bullied me, harried me till I got my junior house-cap. And I at last began to get my own back in a small way. For Jim was, frankly, not brilliant in school, and I found all things easy.

"Gee!" said Jim frequently. "If I had your brains, young Beamish!"

"You could have them, if I could give them to you."

"I know, fathead. What's the use of talking! You mug-up fifty lines of Cæsar for both of us, and then I'll take you out and bowl to you till you can do that half-volley properly."

So that we two combined forces and climbed steadily, hand-in-hand, until we were as gods together, the pride of the playing fields and the glory of the class-room and the Speech Day. Jim led. I followed. I used the brains God gave me for Jim as well as for myself, and he learnt amazingly once I had done the "spade work" which his racing energy found too slow and irksome. But even so he was always first, and first amazingly. His capacity for sizing up a situation was exceptional, and he secured for himself, and me, whatever he set his heart on.

It was Jim, of course, who threw down

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A. E. W. Mason's "Four Feathers," and said we ought to join the Army Class in preparation for Sandhurst. I jumped at the idea. We wrote to our parents, who made no objection, and our study became an art-gallery of famous generals, an epitome of the history of the British Army, our tables were littered with forgotten despatches, and we played together the "war-game" that at the time had been recently invented in Germany.

But when the time came they rejected me as medically unfit, and my Jim, who sailed through, was deaf to entreaty. He calmly, deliberately, and obstinately turned down the whole thing because I could not go with him.

So we went back to Fellsall.

"Chemistry," said Jim, "it's *the* thing, and you're good at it."

"So are you," I retorted.

"I can be, kid," said he, "if you'll show me."

So we shook hands and saw the Head. And this gave us three more happy terms at Fellsall, during which Jim captained footer and cricket and made me his right-hand man, and we both got distinctions in Classics, in French, in Maths., and more especially in the "Stinks" which were to be our career in the future.

"No University," said Jim, and I agreed. "We want to make money and a career," he declared.

But my father was adamant.

"You need not take a degree," he said, "but a year or two at Oxford will do you no harm. Harry goes anyhow, and that's flat."

"All right then," said Jim. "Me for Oxford." And we went to Magdalen.

But I am forgetting Betty.

In the days when Jim first took hold of me, and taught me to hold a straight bat, we were naturally enough on tolerable terms of friendship with a number of children in the district. A group of boys used to come and knock a ball about in our garden or the Corrance's, and in winter we used to kick a football about on the common or go skating on Hampstead ponds. And into our games, at first shyly, then impudently, came Betty—a long, ungainly girl in a torn frock, and long black stockings, who wouldn't play fair. She was never "out" without argument. She resigned her bat under compulsion, and waved her red-gold curls defiantly to prove her point. She sneaked away when her turn came to field, and turned up again impudently to be bowled to.

Jim used to laugh about it. He said that as queen of our games Betty required privileges of royalty. But I was annoyed when she took his skates one winter and refused to give them back; and I hated her for days after she had excused herself for coming home late by blaming Jim Corrance. He had, as a matter of fact, waited for her, and had been vainly urging her to come home for an hour before she went at length.

When Jim and I were home for holidays from Fellsall, she had developed into an astonishing little flirt. Her red-gold hair was no longer untidy, and her frock was not the old torn one. Her long black stockings were longer than ever, but she had abandoned games—boys' games at least. She was already a woman. She would look at Jim and me with big black eyes that she turned away quickly when we caught her staring. Where do women learn such tricks? Anyhow, Jim and I fell in love with her at once.

It was all childishness, of course, and unimportant, and, as a matter of fact, we hardly saw her much. Her people moved Highgate way, and we went back to school.

But in one of our summers on the Welsh coast, when Jim and I were one day struggling, on the beach, to launch a great rowing-boat that was too heavy for us, we heard a scream and saw a small crowd collect, and in the sea, just beyond the surf, a red-gold head of hair that bobbed up and down in the water between wildly-waving arms—a girl-bather in difficulties. Jim did not hesitate a second. He rushed, clothes, boots, and all, into the water; seized the wildly-waving arms, and dragged the girl ashore. And *it was Betty!*

Not even my fondness for Jim could persuade me that it was a particularly brave thing that he did. He swam magnificently, as I did. The girl was only just out of her depth, and was not even in danger if she had kept her head. However, he was the hero of the hour, and he hated it. As a consequence, Betty was the heroine. And she loved it. She liked the sensation and the excitement, and she loved being pointed out as the girl who was pulled out of the sea by young Corrance. And I, sometimes, found it in my heart to wonder if she had not, possibly, premeditated the thing, planned it, and overdone it by mistake.

Still, we were both glad to see her again, and she was very nice to both of us. She accompanied us on one or two fishing excursions and rather spoilt things. We were too old and too young to be attracted by her, and Betty as an oarsman or as a sailor was simply ridiculous.

She kissed us both when we left at the

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The bridge-ends had parted at the centre and were both dipping. . . . I had the two handles under my thumb. I could swing either half of the bridge clear, but *not both*——

holiday's end, but I know we had neither of us a heartache when we waved good-bye.

And then she turned up at Oxford for Commemoration in charge of a male cousin at Christ's. Jim was on the river, and I, for some reason, was not and I was entering a shop to buy something when a man came out with two ladies, one elderly, the other a red-gold vision of young loveliness. It was Betty!

She jumped delightedly to grasp my hand, and introduced me to her cousin and the elderly lady, her aunt.

I accepted their invitation to tea for myself and Jim, and we saw quite a lot of them. She gave me one evening three dances, and let me take her down to supper, and I fell head over ears in love with her. Jim was not a dancing man, and I heard of him vaguely as playing bridge. Moreover, he did not seem to take much notice of Betty. However, I thought I would sound him and see.

"Like Betty?" he said, carelessly. "Why, of course. Don't you?"

"I love her," I told him, "but if you——"

"I don't," said Jim. "Go in and win, youngster."

So the following day I asked Betty to marry me.

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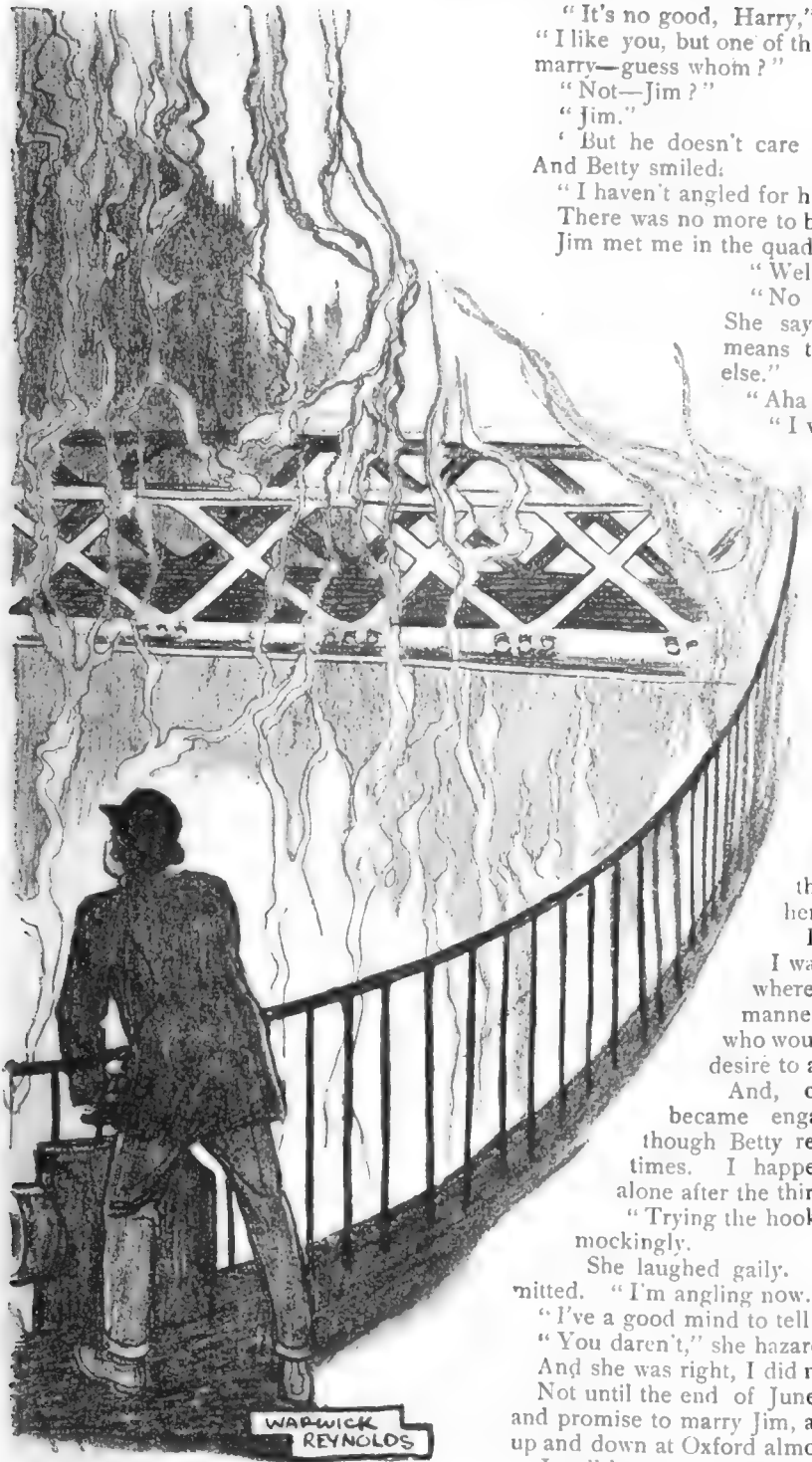

—I deliberately pressed Jim's handle and swung him clear, and Betty's half of the bridge was still dipping—dipping.

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"It's no good, Harry," she said frankly. "I like you, but one of these days I mean to marry—guess whom?"

"Not—Jim?"

"Jim."

"But he doesn't care a rap for you?" And Betty smiled:

"I haven't angled for him yet."

There was no more to be said.

Jim met me in the quadrangle with a grin.

"Well?"

"No good, old man. She says she wants and means to have somebody else."

"Aha!" said Jim softly, "I wonder whom."

I was silent. He looked at me.

"Are you sure you're quite out of the running, old man?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, I'll tell you then, son. I'm going to have a shot myself."

"But you said you——"

"Oh, shut up," blurted out my Jim; "I thought you wanted her."

I left him in haste. I wanted to be somewhere by myself. What manner of man was this who would give his heart's desire to a friend?

And, of course, they became engaged eventually, though Betty refused him three times. I happened to see her alone after the third refusal.

"Trying the hook, Betty?" I said mockingly.

She laughed gaily. "Yes," she admitted. "I'm angling now."

"I've a good mind to tell him," I said.

"You daren't," she hazarded,

And she was right, I did not dare.

Not until the end of June did she relent and promise to marry Jim, although she was up and down at Oxford almost weekly with, as I well know, no other end in view.

And then the war caught us.

"I'm joining up, Beamish," declared Jim. "Coming?

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We joined together, went to France early n March, were at the second battle of Ypres, at Givinchy, and at Loos, and Jim leclared for commissions for the pair of us.

"We're not doing our full whack," he said, 'unless we do. I shirked the responsi-bility, but they could do with us. What do 'ou say?"

Of course I agreed. And in Cadet School ve managed to keep together. Later we vere gazetted to the same battalion. Of our prowess I would say little. We did as much ind no more than others. But when, once, I vas—largely on account of an ability to speak fluent French—attached temporarily to headquarters, the Colonel spoke to me.

"You will be glad to know, Beamish," said he, "that I had the pleasure of telling your friend, Corrance, that I regarded him as 'a very gallant gentleman.'"

Now what did Jim do? It sounded like he V.C. But nobody seemed to know when got back.

Jim told me, shortly, to go to hell. And hat's all the recognition Jim ever got for doing something that must have been wonderful, which, moreover, he must have wilfully kept to himself and his C.O.

Then I got hit. Nothing much. A bullet through the ankle. Jim saw me later at the clearing station.

"You'll be all right," said he. "You'll be glad to know we got the man who got *you*. Machine gun post. Cheer-o! And my love o Betty."

Betty had, of course, corresponded with both of us, with Jim naturally more than me. neglected to inform her that I was wounded, because these letters from France were always regarded more seriously than was sometimes necessary.

I was evacuated to the base, and later to England, and went as convalescent to Cornwall. And there, up on crutches for the fifth or sixth week, I met—Betty!

"You!" she almost screamed in the road.

"You!" I gasped in return. "Here!"

"Yes," she said. "I funked the air raids. tried to be a V.A.D. and couldn't. I hated bandages and ether and blood and wounds. am hiding here."

She hung her head. "Jim writes to me in London. He thinks I'm there. You won't give me away?"

I promised, but with a bitter taste in my mouth. To think our Betty should come to this. It was to my mind the stolen innings, the stolen skates once again. And I despised her still more when I found that she was having a fairly good time with several young fellows in the neighbourhood; some of them convalescent officers like myself, others frankly civilians, and perhaps shirkers all.

And then came the news that Jim was wounded too. Very serious. I met Betty in the lane.

"You will go, of course?" I asked.

She shuddered.

"I, I—daren't."

"Betty!"

Jim and I were demobilised a year or so later and considered things seriously.

"Chemistry still, Jim?" I asked him.

"Why, yes, Harry. I struck a man in hospital who's got a new process for Bessemer steel and I think it's the goods. We must look for a foundry. Practical this time. No Oxford and philandering. I want to get married."

"You've seen her?" I asked.

"Why, of course. Often."

I had never seen her since her great, great failure. But then Jim didn't know. Why tell him?

Well, we found our foundry in the Midlands and my father stumped up handsomely, and so did Mrs. Corrance. In a few days it was ours. It had paid well during the War, but was now being run at a loss. However, Jim was so sure that with a new process it would pay hands down.

We went together to inspect. Work was being carried on in a desultory way, but extensive repairs and alterations would be needed. We put up at the local hotel and on the Saturday evening came a telegram from Betty.

"Arriving 8.5. Want to see your foundry."

"I wanted nothing on earth half so much," said Jim.

Betty arrived and we fêted her right royally. We were to have a thorough inspection of the works next day. That ast good-night at her bedroom door!

"We three!" she said, "and Bessemer steel!"

I kissed the tips of her fingers and forgave her all and everything. God knows I loved her well.

We set out early and made the thorough tour we intended. It was Sunday and an off-day, but an odd man here and there kept furnaces going. We went through puddling, casting, melting, forging, tempering rooms, and we kept as the last tit-bit the great pickling-vat.

This was a circular tower some ninety feet high, with a diameter of fifty feet, intimately connected with our new process of flexible steel. From its roof poured at will finely

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divided water and acids, which fell a hundred feet below into a basin of molten iron. With a forced down-draught from the roof these mingled vapours hit the iron at white-heat and gave it qualities such as the trade had never realised before.

Over the basin ran a bridge where experts used to watch the colours of the metal below. For as it boiled and bubbled and foamed the greens and greys and violets mean: stages in "pickling" that were significant guides as to quality and temper.

"And it's lovely," said the foreman-engineer, "to see the colours from the bridge. You might see it next week, only the bridge doesn't lock properly now."

He showed us how the bridge, in two sections, locked automatically in the centre, and how either side could be swung clear to avoid the great heat that sometimes rose from the molten iron. The two handles that controlled, each handle one side, worked easily under his touch.

"Next week," he said, "you could go over and look down. It's a fine sight. Only just now the ends don't lock properly in the middle."

"Doesn't anybody go over now?" asked Jim.

"Well, you see, sir," returned the engineer, "we 'as to take risks in our job. But it ain't safe for you."

"I shan't be here next week," pouted Betty.

"Better leave it," said Jim.

"I want to look from the bridge," declared Betty.

"T'ain't safe, miss."

"Other people go," objected Betty.

The engineer shrugged his shoulders.

"Come on, Jim!" cried Betty, rushing across the bridge, and Jim followed.

"'Ere," said the engineer, grasping me firmly, "not more than two at a time, anyhow."

And Betty and Jim were on the bridge.

"Oh, look!" she said delightedly, "there's brown, and green, and grey, and violet, and yellow, and oh, I love this hot vapour in my face!"

A hoarse cry came from the engineer. The bridge-ends had parted at the centre and were both dipping—dipping. Neither of them could keep their feet for more than a second or so. Betty on one half and Jim on the other, and both going to a dreadful death!

It all happened within three seconds. I had the two handles under my thumbs. I could swing either half of the bridge clear, but *not both*. I had a fraction of a second to make up my mind. I could save Jim—or Betty.

All their lives flashed through my vision—Jim's record, wonderful, immense; Betty's, mean, little, selfish, and of no value to any human being! Yet Betty was a woman, and the code of the men who count says "woman first." But then Jim was Jim, and Betty——"

So I deliberately pressed Jim's handle and swung him clear, and Betty's half of the bridge was still dipping—dipping. And Jim turned and looked at me, knowing full well what I had done. In that last glance of his there was anger and scorn and hatred beyond all that was ever before in a man's eyes.

It was I who, against his will, had bought his life at the cost of the woman he loved, who had made him a coward unfit to walk the earth—without his will in the matter being consulted for an instant; and God forbid that a man should ever, after me, meet such a look from his friend.

Then Jim turned and—jumped resolutely into the furnace below. I saw his object. If he could get beneath Betty, he might conceivably save her from death, might lift her clear. It was the millioneth chance for her, and to him certain death. And Jim took the chance as Betty slipped and fell.

The engineer dragged me away, howling, moaning. We were both blubbering, weakly, brokenly, like men may have done when they were taken back from the tortures. I rushed shrieking into the sunlight of broad day, and I must have fainted.

I am writing this in a long, clean hospital ward. I cannot look to left or right. I am too weak. I hope to die. But before that I wanted to put this, my story, on paper. I am not in pain. But the agony of my soul!

I have slept some twenty hours. I have been to realms where one looks over the brink, and more often does not return. I have dreamt and thought deeply, and I see that I have my life to live, for I am the man Jim made me.

I am taking a little comfort in a great thought that came to me in my dreams. Betty died instantly, so I hear, and Jim, of course. So that these two have gone hand-in-hand to a world that surpasses human understanding. In the greatness of their understanding they will each find forgiveness. And Jim, reading my meaning to the full, will take Betty to his great heart and—explain.

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"Ginger Nan."

By Leslie R. Strong.

Illustrated by E. H. Thomas.

THE firm gave her an afternoon off, and the girls in her department said they hoped it would be a few hundreds.

"Ginger Nan" laughed. She had been expecting her ship to come home for too long to believe that it had really reached harbour.

Against a background of massed violets, artificial, but as sweetly scented as the real ones that hid from sight on banks of wet moss and waving grasses, her hair smouldered redly. Nan did not like purple, although she knew that a famous painter had painted a girl with just her coloured hair in a purple frock, standing in a field of red poppies. She had gone to see it on one of her afternoons off, and had said, to the delight of an art student who was passing:

"Purple and red, and then a second red. Well, *I* call it beastly!"

The student had looked from Nan's red hair to the red hair in the picture and had choked suddenly.

"And what's more," Nan said, "her face wants powdering!"

Nan sold powders and perfumes, and the endless expensive trifles which women buy to retain their fleeting beauty, and because all powders looked delightful on her smooth, satin skin the firm thought much of her. Her dark, pencilled eyebrows sold many eyebrow pencils, and her scarlet lips numberless lipsticks; with bored attention she advised rouge and powder for skins which she secretly thought required distemper as a covering; and the marcelled-haired, over-jewelled women, after one glance at her rose-leaf colouring, bought lavishly.

It was early, and Nan's counter was deserted. The ladies who required cosmetics were still drinking morning tea or cuddling under down quilts; only a couple of schoolgirls were fingering nail files and powder puffs and giggling inanely together.

The pretty, consumptive girl who sold scented soap on the strength of her delicate pink and white complexion, moved nearer to her:

"Nan, suppose it's a hundred?"

"No such luck! Most likely five pounds and a parrot."

"What'll you do with it, Nan?"

"Buy real doe-skin shoes and screw its neck round!" said Nan sharply.

The girl with the lovely, slender hands drifted idly into the conversation:

"Where did she live, Nan? What was she like?"

"One new bonnet in ten years; top floor, up sixty-two steps, I counted 'em last time; asthma, and hated her relatives!"

The consumptive girl ventured timidly:

"But you must have been her favourite niece, Nan, or she wouldn't have left it to you."

"Not I! Left it to me to spite the others!"

And Nan was nearer the truth than she knew.

A customer, in a well-cut rough morning coat and skirt, asked to see some perfumes. Nan took down the expensive ones that you bought in plain bottles by the ounce, pushing aside the beautifully labelled "Heliotrope" and "Wall-flower." She could tell at a glance when a customer would refuse both "Lily of the Valley" and the heavy Oriental perfumes. Nan loved the better scents, and her fingers caressed the tiny bottles as she packed them carefully. She was thinking that if it really were five pounds she would buy one bottle all for herself; she would take it home and open it in her bedroom. "And for once the room shall be full of a smell that isn't a stink!" she told herself fiercely, for her room looked down on a street where cabbages and onions that were rapidly qualifying for old age pensions threw their odour to Nan's bedroom and the distant heavens.

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She liked the look of the girl she was serving; her face wasn't all mucked up with powder, and her hair was smooth as a bird's wing. Nan hated selling the better perfumes to women who did not know them, except by their price, from "Violet" or "White Rose."

It was a slack morning, and she thought often of the little old lady who had died, as she had wished, alone. It was odd how she had kept them all at arm's length; they had not even known that she was ill until the letter had come from the lawyers asking Nan to call at their office. Miss Helen Marsh was dead, and Nan alone had been remembered.

"Must have been because I hardly ever went near her, and she got fed up with all the others," Nan thought cheerfully.

A few hours later she was climbing the long dusty flight of stairs to the office and saying:

"It can't be more than five pounds or she'd have bought a new bonnet."

An hour later she stumbled down them and blinked foolishly at the autumn sunshine.

It was two hundred!

The future lay before her, veiled by rose curtains. You could do such a lot of things with a pound, you could do such million billion things with two hundred.

She could bank it, save and screw, add more to it, keep it for her old age.

But who wanted an old age on two hundred pounds?

She could buy a thick tweed coat and skirt instead of her thin serge one.

She could let her family spend it for her, as in the past they had spent most of her earnings.

"But I *don't* think!" she said firmly.

Adventure walked down the street with her and whispered of joys that were not founded on the rock of safe investments, but on to-day's sand, golden, glowing, to be washed away by the night's tide; to possess for a moment, to take no heed for to-morrow, to laugh and dance in the sunshine, even if you died at the first touch of frost.

She paused at a window that held bloated red polonies. One would just do for supper. A thin, big-eyed girl pushed a tray of slender-stemmed roses before her.

"Only threepence each, lady."

She laughed, and bought four glorious crimson ones. They were more beautiful than the polony; it would be fun for once to feed soul instead of body.

An hour later she faced an astounded, indignant, reproachful family.

They had surrounded her the moment she arrived.

"Was it twenty? More? Was it fifty?"

"It's two hundred," Nan said calmly.

The brother who went to the Secondary School, and always spoke of himself as a Public-school boy, exulted openly.

"Oh, good bizz! Now I can have that new cricket bat."

The sister who had delayed her departure to the cinema to hear the news laughed excitedly.

"Nan, I'll get that dinner frock we saw. The cream one with the gold roses. I can't go to a decent place in a skirt and blouse, and young Smith has offered to take me."

"And we might as well take rinking lessons. It'll be the thing soon, like jazzing."

They had begun to spend her money.

Nan listened, her little flame-covered head that had earned her the name of "Ginger" thrown back against the faded green cushions, her scarlet mouth faintly scornful.

Presently she rose wearily.

"I'm spending it on myself, and that's that!" she said clearly.

"Nan!" in masculine surprise.

"Nan!" in feminine protest.

"Nan!" in motherly reproach.

"And that's that." Nan repeated.

"Girls always are selfish; all they think of is buying frocks."

"I'm not buying frocks."

"You're not going to invest it, Nan?"

They were not a family who made saving a hobby.

"It'll be frittered away," the brother said bitterly. "Frittered away, and no one the better."

"I shall be better," Nan said softly.

"Intend to tell us your plans? Don't if you'd rather not."

Nan dropped her bomb neatly and carefully, and fled from the sound of its explosion.

Adventure had smiled into her eyes, Romance had beckoned. In a voice very different from the voice of the Nan who every morning said: "No, I won't be late home, Mother," she turned and delivered her ultimatum:

"I'm going to buy a motor-bike and side-car—*and* side-car!" she repeated.

II.

She found that buying motors was much like buying perfumes—the most beautiful to behold did not always smell the nicest. The big boy with freckles helped her.

"Of course, if you want a Rolls-Royce," he said, "we've not one in stock, but we'll order."

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"When I do I'll sit inside and have you to drive it."

"Cheek! Have that red one; it'll match your hair!"

They laughed into each other's eyes like children.

"Say, I'll teach you to drive in the evenings. We close at six."

"That's decent of you. Could I keep it here? Our back yard wouldn't hold a scooter."

"If you'll let us use it a bit in the daytime I'll arrange it."

"That's good of you. If I have the one at £120 it will leave me eighty pounds for licences and petrol."

"What'll you do when that's gone?"

"Die!" said Nan briefly.

She paid the money in notes; then she stroked the smooth grey side of the car as if it were the cheek of a loved one.

"Mine!" she said, and her eyes were shining.

"Yours!" said the freckled boy.

"How long will it take you to teach me?"

"Ten days if you don't watch the boys on the pavement."

She blew little yelps on the horn.

"You know, I'm quite mad to buy this."

"The sane people have such a damn' dull time, though," said the freckled boy.

She went every night the moment the shop closed.

The freckled boy showed her brakes, clutch, and gears.

Her family did not speak to her.

She went every night for a second week.

The freckled boy showed her carburettor and sparking-plugs.

Her family spoke of her when she was present.

"You'll do," the boy said at the end of a run through a crowded street. "You've plenty of nerve, but you'd do with more caution."

"It's lovely to be reckless sometimes."

"Yes, if you're sure the brakes will act when you want them."

"You're talking like a parson."

"I don't want the bike to be smashed."

"Don't care about me, I suppose?"

The freckled boy looked at her, and the colour flamed to her face.

"Nan, suppose you let me go on teaching you things?" He put his hand over hers as it rested on the handle.

She looked at him with cool grey eyes; her colour had faded.

"I think that some day I may perhaps want that Rolls-Royce."

"I see, and you'll go and look for it with this?"

"Well, I won't find it round here."

"No, you won't find it here, but you might find other things—love, perhaps, and happiness."

"I'd like to ride in that Rolls-Royce first, just to see if the cushions really are soft."

"Suppose the door shuts and you can't get out?"

"I'd break the window," she said sharply.

He laughed:

"Yes, I think you would. Well, I hope you'll find happiness without having to break a window to reach it."

"Suppose I don't?"

"Well, you'll probably find me still here, waiting."

That night in her little bare bedroom she spread out the bills for one motor-bike and side-car, one driver's licence, one third party risk insurance, and four tins of petrol.

They were the key to the door called Adventure.

On a chair lay a rain coat, a pair of leggings, a cap and waterproof breeches.

She looked at them happily.

Then for a moment she saw a boy's freckled face, and her mouth drooped into a pathetic curve.

"Two pounds a week, four perhaps when he's older, and bringing my own potatoes home in a carpet bag, and hanging my own washing out on a bit of string, and nursing my own babies."

She shuddered and climbed rapidly into bed.

III.

The next Sunday she started early while her family were still sleeping, and drove through the quiet streets into the open country. It was only nine o'clock; the blue smoke was curling up from cottage chimneys, the cows were lowing in the distant farms, a milk cart rattled past her. The cool fresh wind blew on her cheeks, and she knew that she had always hated the small untidy house, the nearness of her family; she wanted open spaces, the scent of earth and rain-drenched flowers. She liked it better than any of the scents she sold.

She stopped in a quiet lane, and thought of the dusty streets, the glaring windows that she had seen all the week, the stuffy cinemas and noisy, crowded restaurants where she had spent each evening. To-day she was going to drink her tea and eat her sandwiches sitting on a bank and listening to the birds singing.

She had never felt sentimental in all her

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"Nan, suppose you let me go on teaching you things?" He put his hand over hers as it rested on the handle.

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life, but now she wanted to press her cheek to that mossy bank, hold those cool, white flowers—she did not know their name—against her tired eyes. She had sat unmoved while the filmed woes of the deserted wife, the starved child, the hopeless lover, were flicked rapidly before her, but now the tears were smarting at the sight of the pink-tipped edge of a field daisy.

He came into her life whistling carelessly, the sunlight playing on his bare head.

"Anything wrong?" he asked. His voice had a pleasant intonation.

Nan smiled, for he was romantically good-looking.

"Thanks, no. I stopped to enjoy the country."

He hesitated. She had taken off her cap, and he was watching her red hair blowing out against a blue sky.

"Sure it will be all right when you start again?"

She liked his crisp, brown hair, his shyness, his rough tweed suit. He was part of the country picture.

"Well, it may not be," she conceded.

"Suppose I come a bit of the way with you and see?"

She laughed softly. She knew suddenly that she hated the smug, polished men who served in the other departments—the men who came from numbered houses in little streets after a breakfast of coffee, bacon, and waterglass eggs. She liked rough, wind-tossed hair, and she could *not* picture him ever saying:

"Ribbon? Yes, madam, we have every shade."

"You know," he suggested, "it's awfully unsafe to drive without someone in the side-car."

"Well, if you really think so——"

He ran the machine into the middle of the road and turned on the petrol.

They parted regretfully two hours later.

"Can't see why you won't meet me before next Saturday," he said.

"Can't; I'm a worker."

"With this new bike?"

"It's true. Some day perhaps I'll tell you all about it."

"I work, too. I'm a farmer. I would be. Dad's a doctor."

"Near here?"

"No; London. He's a dab on consumption."

She thought of the pretty consumptive girl in her shop.

"It must be great to cure things like that."

"It is; but it's just as great to send up clean, pure milk, so folks don't get it."

Nan listened absently. She was wondering if a farmer ever bought a Rolls-Royce.

She met him the next Saturday and they went far into the country, and later found a path that might eventually lead to Paradise. It was just wide enough for two, and they went down it hand in hand.

They had lunch in the shade of a big oak, and he lay on the grass at her feet and adored her with his eyes.

He spoke of his dreams for the future, his plans to make the world better, to do good even as his father was doing, and she watched his crisp, curling hair and the blue eyes that flashed in the sunlight.

She met him the next Sunday and they went up the river. The motor-bike stood idle in its shed. She wore a white frock and a hat trimmed with pink roses. She felt suddenly that she did not always want to meet him in a raincoat and leggings. She did not quite understand herself in those days, and she refused to tell him where she worked. His father was a great doctor and she was a shop-girl.

"If I'd been a cashier it would have been different," she thought bitterly.

She began to look at the farm magazines on the bookstall, and one day she read an article on "Pig-keeping for Women."

She let the shopwalker, to his great surprise, take her out that evening to forget it. After all, she decided there were worse places than Town.

She sold perfumes and powders carelessly, and recommended *poudre blanche* to a florid-faced woman.

"Nan!" the consumptive girl whispered. "She'll look like a red rose dipped in a flour-bag!"

He was coming to Town that week; he had told her that he should find her.

"I shall come straight to you," he said boldly. "I shall say, 'Nan, Nan, Nan!' Do you think that my heart will not lead me to you?"

"I sell bacon and cheese," she stated. "I wear a big white apron, and cut it up in slices with a huge knife."

"Pouf!" he said gaily. "Did you never hear of a bacon-cutting machine?"

"I sell tinned milk," she hedged quickly, "and I say how much better it is than cows'."

"You don't," he said. "You sell—flowers? Scents?"

She coloured and her eyes fell before his.

"Caught!" he cried triumphantly.

"You're not sure."

"I am. I'll buy scent at every shop in Town till I find you."

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She watched the big swing-doors to the shop, and every time a tweed-clad figure entered she started. It was absurd. He would never find her, but he had been so certain. Something in his eyes as he said, "I shall find you" kept her nervously watching.

"Nan," the consumptive girl whispered, "you're always flushing. I believe you're in love."

He came on the last day, when she had given up expecting him and was unhappy because he had not found her. Very slowly he walked past the flaming orange jumper that reminded him oddly of Ann's flaming hair; very softly he walked past the shimmer of draped grey satin that reminded him oddly of Ann's cool grey eyes, and then he was standing before her counter.

"You!" he said triumphantly.

"You!" Nan said shakily.

"And now," he asked, "what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to sell you some scent."

"But you know, Nan, that I hate it."

"Your sister, or your aunt, or your grandmother probably adores it."

"Nan, the girls who sold tinned milk all had turned-up noses."

Nan gurgled.

A customer whom she had served the day before came up with a repeat order, and she turned away to hunt up special creams and powders.

"Order something," she whispered.

The consumptive girl came forward.

"I want some scent for my sister," he said, and his smile was very charming.

"She is like you?" the girl questioned. "Personality means so much in scent, I think."

"Good Lor', no! Do I look like a scent-user?"

Nan, tying up creams and powders, watched them curiously.

She came back presently, and the consumptive girl moved away.

"Nan, I'm going to wait for you outside."

She looked at the big clock.

"You'll have to wait twenty minutes."

"I'd wait a lifetime if you came in the end."

The consumptive girl watched them enviously.

They walked up the street together. The flower-woman at the corner offered them sweet-scented, brilliantly-coloured bunches.

"Country flowers." Nan smiled.

"Flowers ought to grow in grass, one by one. I hate to see them tied up in masses like that."

"Everything in Town is crowded." Her voice was wistful.

Her shoulder touched his as they walked down the street, and she thrilled and forgot the article on pig-keeping. Perhaps he would not always live in the country; sometimes they might stay in Town.

"What's wrong with the pretty girl who served me, Nan?"

"Consumption."

"Has she seen a doctor?"

"Oh, I suppose so. A panel one, of course; shop girls don't patronise swells."

"I wish Dad could see her."

"He wouldn't. Toffs like your father cost money."

"He would if I asked him."

"He wouldn't. He'd smile at the idea of coming to see a shop-girl."

"I'd say she was a friend."

"Then he'd jolly soon stop smiling!"

"You're bitter. Wait till you see him. You'll love him!"

"M'm, but the point is, will he love me?"

"Nan," said the consumptive girl next morning, "where did you meet him?"

"In a land starred with daisies."

"He looks it. Sort of good and kind. Will he come again?"

"He may if his aunt or grandmother wants more scent."

He did!

Apparently he possessed a large circle of female relatives who were pining for scents, powders, creams, orange-sticks, and even "Bay Rum" and "White Paraffin."

Sometimes the consumptive girl served him, and then the selection was a long and careful one.

"Those women of his must have been a rum lot of guys before he took them in hand," Nan said. "Sort of shining saints, particularly about the noses."

"Nan," the girl said, "you don't mind if I serve him when you're busy?"

"Not a scrap," Nan said untruthfully.

"Don't you care for him, Nan?"

The pretty, tired voice held unconscious longing.

Nan turned and looked at her. She had surprised a look in the boy's eyes that morning when the girl served him.

"Oh, he's fun, and there's no one else."

"And I'm sure the country must be beastly in the winter," she thought bravely as she watched a faint rapturous light dawn in the weary blue eyes.

She met the boy next Saturday as usual. There was a set firm look on his face, and as

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soon as they had left the town behind them he turned to her.

"Stop the bike, Nan. I want to talk to you."

She sighed regretfully, for she surmised what was coming.

"Nan," he said gently, "I want you to marry me."

She sighed again. Life was a queer tangle. It offered you the things you wanted and you could not take them.

"Boy, you don't really love me."

"I do!"

They were standing in a small grass-grown lane; the country, cool, fresh, extraordinarily desirable, was around them. He was very loyal, this boy; he believed that he had made her love him and so only one honourable course lay before him.

"I should make a rotten farmer's wife," she protested.

"We could live in London if you liked. I could let the farm."

It was her dream come true. Birds and blue sky, sunshine and spring flowers; and then, when the fogs of winter closed around them, London, pulsing with life and beauty.

Just a whispered "Yes," and luxury lay before her.

She thought of the consumptive girl's hungry eyes, of the way the boy had looked at her that morning, and then suddenly she thought of the freckled boy with his strong hands and oil-stained coat.

She turned quickly and held out her hands. Very gently he took them in his.

"Is it yes, Nan?"

She laughed, high-pitched laughter that broke at the end.

"Boy, you can kiss me."

Puzzled and white-faced, he bent and kissed her.

For a moment she shut her eyes; then she smiled up at him.

"That's for good-bye," she said softly. "You're good, and dear, and true, but to-morrow I think you will buy more perfumes."

He coloured under his fresh, clear skin.

"How did you know?" he stammered.

"Oh, wise youth, you proclaimed it on the house-tops."

"Nan, Dad is going to see her. He thinks he can cure her."

"I'm glad." She cranked up the bike fiercely. After all, love was very sweet, and the world was very cold without it.

The consumptive girl came to her five days later.

"Oh," she said, "isn't it wonderful? He loves me, and I'm to go and live in the country and get strong." Her eyes were shining.

"I'm glad," Nan said, and there was a queer little pain at her heart.

"You don't mind?" the girl asked wistfully. "He was yours first really."

"Not a scrap," Nan said cheerfully, for she had suddenly remembered that the freckled boy had cleaned and oiled the bike, and that to-morrow was another Saturday.

MY SWEET.

My sweet, you seem so far away—
Where goes your tender soul astray?
What power beyond my worship lies,
To wake desire within your eyes,
And draw you from my arms to-day?

That golden shrine at which I pray,
Your head, upon my shoulder lay—
And love like incense deifies
My sweet.

What, tired?—so tired of lover's play?
And wistful that she yet must stay
To help one halt and weary-wise
Across man's foolish bridge of sighs? . . .
God grant I soon shall find the way
My sweet!

Gwen Nisbet.

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Wives.

By

Michael Annesley.

Illustrated by Rut Herman.

These be wise words, Beloved, yea a sweet and seemly discourse having a savour of wild olives and Shemel-Neesim. For he that writeth, even the scribe, knoweth all things concerning wives, being a mighty man of valour and a slayer of many, and such do women love.—Ed. R. M.

THERE is to-day a most extraordinary "you be damned" air about the women folk. It may be merely war-time emancipation, it may be due to their greatly increased liking for active participation in all forms of sport.

No matter how it has arisen it is there and we men are wondering whether we like it or not.

Getting married was rather like donning khaki, while the war lasted. If you weren't already irrevocably tied up, it was one of the things to do; if you were already fixed you acquired a perfectly respectable "Stepney" while you were in England and "carried on."

All that is over now and people are approaching marriage much more warily. Not the "unmarried million," bless them, but the men themselves. Hence the burning questions in the daily papers, such as "Do fair girls make the best wives?"

Personally I don't think it matters two hoots, etc, whether a girl's hair is black or brown or red or any colour; it's the mental outlook and statistics of amiability which count in the long run. A woman may be as beautiful as Venus, a skilled housewife and a perfect mother, and yet succeed in driving her husband to drink if she doesn't know how to vamp up the right tune when things are running wrong with him.

Most girls never have a chance to become good wives because they are brought up by their mothers to be "attractive," with a view to the early acquisition of a man. This training, which embraces the prospect of a suburban villa and a husband who is "something in the City," "At Home" days, store cupboards, and tradesmen's books is about the worst training any girl could possibly have. She is taught first to catch the brute and then feed him. But the "brute" doesn't want feeding; he's learnt his food values on active service and knows of other things which count for a good deal more.

What the average man wants now-a-days is a pal, not a housekeeper. We are most of us missing the old regimental messes and the good offices of our soldier servants. We don't care whether we get a bloater or a lemon sole for breakfast. We don't even mind if we find the fire out and no dinner ready when we get home at night. There is always some sort of a restaurant within moderately easy reach, but what we do object to are tears and temper if a meal is spoilt because we have met an old pal and are half an hour late, and not being allowed to put our feet on the mantel-piece if we want to.

The conventional suburban "Miss" is far more interested in living than in life, of which she is afraid, and so regards marriage as a necessary but beastly business.

She takes the routine of her household duties too seriously and turns life into one

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Suburbia cries for hours over spilt milk which little Bohemia mops up with her best camisole or her husband's only silk shirt.

eternal Commanding Officer's parade. She makes few mistakes, it is true, but each one is a veritable tragedy of which her weary husband never hears the end.

Suburbia cries for hours over spilt milk which little Bohemia mops up with her best camisole or her husband's only silk shirt, whichever happens to come handy first. And the husband doesn't mind because he's Bohemia's playmate and together they see the joke of the whole thing.

In Bohemia it is neither a sin nor a tragedy to be without servants, and if the domestic machinery doesn't often run on well-oiled wheels it doesn't matter so very much after all. There is comradeship in plenty. The sight of Annette, or Clarice, or Phil, cooking breakfast in a ragged old silk kimono with a cigarette wagging in her lips as she chatters, seems only to reawaken the spirit of the service days, and anyway she's always got a smile and probably a sly caress for her man first thing in the morning and last thing at night.

Bohemia, too, chooses its dwellings with a craft and suitability that is equal to second sight. The lady knows she is a rotten housekeeper, that she will often forget to order the meat, but there is always a ham and beef shop or a pork butcher's handy whence all supplies, ready cooked, can be requisitioned at a moment's notice.

Oh, I know quite well that the women of the pre-war generation don't approve of Bohemia's habits and that can be easily understood, for the flats and cottages in which Bohemia lives are beastly untidy, with cigarette ends and old pipes all over the place and fishing hooks and loaded revolvers in the most unexpected and inconvenient corners. But a man does not mind how near the powder-puff is kept to the pickled herrings provided he can bring a friend home to grub when he wants to without having to face a domestic scene because he hasn't given at least a week's notice of his intention so to do.

As I have tried to make plain, what a man wants is a pal to play with and not a tear-drenched, complaining creature who works herself to a shadow to keep clean and scrupulously tidy a drawing-room and spare bedroom which will be used perhaps half-a dozen times a year. Or, as another writer put it once, "what a man wants is a little bit of revue in the home," because the ragamuffin little Bohemian pigging it in a tiny flat or studio does find time to be attractive to her husband and to make a fuss of him. If she doesn't keep his quarters over tidy or clean they are at least comfortable, and she retains

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his love and comradeship because by neglecting her household duties she keeps pace with her husband's intellectual growth and so is always a companion to him.

In Suburbia, upon the other hand, where the washing is done on a Monday, the dining-room turned out on Wednesday and the silver cleaned on Saturday, the wife loses sight of her husband's growth, drops right behind him or acquires parochial interests, and there are no lovers at Laburnum Lodge after a year or two, only a rather critical married couple.

Ideas and conventions are just about the hardest things on earth to kill, I know; but surely the essentially Victorian notion that a man gets married because he will find more comforts in a home of his own than are to be expected in lodgings must be absolutely exploded by this time? And, anyway, I don't believe that men ever did get married for the sake of the material comforts a home affords.

Genuine love and the urge of passion have both played big parts as match-makers, but I firmly believe that a far larger proportion of Benedicts become such through sheer loneliness.

There is a waiting time between dinner and bed which the bachelor who cannot afford to be continually gadding about finds intensely hard to fill in without becoming bored to tears. And then again, it's an awfully good thing to have someone with whom to discuss one's ups and downs, the latter particularly.

In other words, I think that most men who get married are seeking, consciously or otherwise, companionship, which at first they undoubtedly get, but as time goes on and responsibilities increase the comradeship becomes less, simply because the man's outlook is broadening all the time, whereas that of his home-bound wife becomes a little more narrow each year. If they are both content to let things drift, then, in the course of time, he outgrows her mentality altogether, and they one day awake to the tragic fact that they have lost touch and have little in common remaining.

The future is, however, full of promise that a better state of things will exist by reason of woman's more knowledgeable and whole-hearted participation in all forms of sport. For the woman who both plays and understands games will not only be a better wife but also a more helpful mother to her sons, for she will always be able to find a meeting ground of common interest with her own men-folk.

What a man wants is a pal to play with and not a tear-drenched, complaining creature who works herself to a shadow doing unnecessary housework.

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Should Youth Be Muzzled?

By Edward Cecil.

Illustrated by G. Thompson.

King David said: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." To the fulfilment of this propheecy in our midst, Mr. Cecil, Youth's champion, looks forward. In this article he strikes another blow for the young of all ages.—(Ed. R.M.)

THERE is at the present time a tremendous fight going on, the very existence of which most people ignore. The fight is the fight of Youth against the forces of prejudice and stereotyped opinions.

Youth won the War. And Youth demands, not that it should undertake alone the shaping of the conditions under which we should live now that the War has been won, but that it should be heard, and that the rights of Youth should be understood and acknowledged.

In the past, that is to say in pre-war days, Youth was muzzled. It was never supposed to be right or proper or even moral for a young man or a young woman to voice his or her opinions and to demand for his or her opinions fair and proper recognition.

In business, in politics, in literature Youth was handicapped, and handicapped by the terrible drawback: "Youth does not know! When you have lived and had experience you will know what you are talking about!" That was the usual attitude of those who possessed power towards those who expressed unorthodox opinions. And gradually, in thousands and thousands of cases, in the homes of the people, in the deliberations of the rulers, that was the eventual condemnation of all who sought to enforce the right for Youth to be heard.

We are now faced in our history with a period of reconstruction, and there is a very great danger that in this reconstruction Youth will not receive an adequate hearing.

It was the young men who were the inspiration of the fighting forces, both naval and military. It was the young women who really did the work which had to be done in this country in order that the naval and military forces might be kept going. It was the young man, who forgot everything except the one necessity to down the foe, and the young woman, who forgot everything except the one necessity to supply munitions, who won the greatest struggle in the history of the world.

In the first place, the whole nation owes a debt of gratitude to its Youth. It owes a debt of gratitude for the fact that it exists as it exists to-day because the young people of the nation saved it. The first claim which Youth has to be heard to-day is this: that Youth won the war.

Youth did its work. Youth gave its blood and its life. And Youth to-day must be heard for this one consideration if for no other. Fortunately there are other considerations why Youth should be heard, but there is this one great claim which must never be forgotten.

The other reasons why Youth should be heard are equally important, but not quite so obvious. When, after a great struggle, the realities of life have come to the front and the trivialities of life have been forced into the background, it requires some vision above the ordinary vision to believe in the eventual triumph of the ideal over the material.

It is only the young who really understand the ideal. It is not merely the young in years; it is the young in spirit.

Frequently men and women who are middle-aged, and men and women who are of advanced age, possess the supreme belief in the triumph of the ideal over the material. These people are young in the very best sense of the word. But it must be conceded that the great majority of middle-aged people and the great majority of old people are soaked in expediency and material ideas. The young are not so soaked. The young are almost always idealists. They believe in the best in life, and their illusions, so called, have not been destroyed. For this, too, Youth should be given a hearing.

It is not only because of the natural belief of Youth in the ideal, however, that Youth at the present time has a right to be heard. The old world has crumbled into the dust. Old ideas have been discredited. Old conceptions have been found wanting, and there has to be a regenerating force.

That regenerating force in this country can

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In Victorian days children were seen and not heard——

only be supplied by the young people of the country. They have not only the vision which their parents and their grandparents lack, but they have also a real and true optimism which the middle-aged and the old do not always possess.

This optimism is a great asset to the British Empire. If the young people believe that the British Empire is going on from strength to strength, the British Empire will go on from strength to strength. And the optimism of the young people in the commercial, the industrial, the moral and the ideal future of the British Empire is the greatest asset which our empire at the present time possesses.

There is yet a further reason why Youth should be heard to-day. The near future is a future of hard times. We are entering upon a period of severe competition. And in severe competition inefficient nations will be beaten, and inefficient people will go to the wall.

It follows, therefore, that in the severe competition which we shall have to face between nations and between rival forces in any one nation, in particular in our own nation, there must be mental agility, swift power of decision, supreme capacity to do quickly the necessary thing (and not to be restrained from doing it by second thoughts), which only Youth possesses.

The old politicians, the old moralists, the old arbiters of what is good and bad taste, still rule the roost. They still do what they did in the past, they muzzle Youth. Whenever the young bring forth new ideas there is always a muzzle which will fit them. This muzzle is perfectly well known and need hardly be described. It is very effectual, and it generally succeeds in closing the mouth of the adventurous young man or young woman who voices his or her opinions.

"When you are a little older you will know better" is the usual stock phrase spoken as the muzzle is put on. And Youth consents and becomes dumb.

In Victorian days this process began early. "Children should be seen and not heard," said the Victorian parent to the schoolboy or schoolgirl who showed individuality. Individuality was taboo. The educational system crushed individuality. The whole idea of the educational system was to force the young of the nation into a mould, to make the boy or the girl at all costs a respectable nonentity, and, whether suffering was involved or not, to blot out absolutely any originality.

As the boy or the girl grew up the attitude of mind of the pre-war middle-aged person towards Youth developed. Not only was it "children should be seen and not heard," but "Young people should not express opinions!" Young people instinctively felt

—But during the late war young girls helped to save the nation.

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that this or that was right. Never mind! If they were young people they were naturally wrong.

It was not supposed that a human being could develop wisdom until that human being was middle-aged. There followed, therefore, a generation of prigs and parasites, of young people who aped their elders.

The real voice of Youth was very seldom heard. There was merely the voice of the crushed and subservient young man or young woman who subscribed to the tin Gods of Respectability rather than to the true gods of human life.

It is true that established interests benefited by the muzzling of the voice of criticism. But the time has come when we can no longer afford to be ruled blindly by established interests in any walk of life. They may be perfectly estimable, but if they are also, as is often the case, stupid and inefficient, they cannot be considered now, when we are forced to reject everything which is not necessary and useful.

The established interests also of a discredited morality cannot be considered when only true morality is of any use, and it is in the world of morals, even more than in the world of politics, that the voice of Youth is crying for hearing. The old-fashioned morality, respectability, and standards of good and bad taste do not appeal to the young people of to-day.

"Why should I do a thing or refrain from doing a thing because my next-door neighbour may or may not approve?" is the question which young people ask. You hear the young girl, who may be the daughter of a Peer of the Realm, asking this question, and you also hear the factory girl asking the same question.

The old standard of morality is discredited. It was often cruel, stupid, and in the interests of those who possessed security and power. But was it right?

Was it right that marriage should be founded upon worldly and material considerations, that a girl should marry a man because he had a banking account which was satisfactory to her parents, and not because she loved him? Should people profess belief in Christianity for one day in the week and practise the laws of worldly expediency for six days out of seven? Could you be a Christian simply by respecting the outward forms of Christianity?

In short, was the underlying motive of keeping up appearances moral or was it not grossly immoral? Youth to-day questions the old-fashioned standards of morality and wishes to establish something purer, cleaner, more useful in the interests of the true moral health of individuals and the community.

Let us hope that the time is near when on every committee, council, board of directors, or any other ruling body there will be some members who are young men and young women. We shall never destroy the prejudices and stupidities of the past, in politics, in morals, or in commerce, unless we give to the voice of Youth a fair hearing and a due and proper consideration.

BETTY.

A little wuff of light brown hair,
Two eyes of deepest blue,
A wee snub nose, two tiny lips,
A rosebud kissed by dew.

Ten little fingers never still,
A smile that knows no fear—
May angels guard you all your life,
And bless you, Betty dear.

Denise June.

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In this, his final, letter Bill warns Felicia against the fatal practice of settling down.

Letters to Felicia.

By F. E. Baily.

Illustrated by A. K. Macdonald.

Few, very few, women rise to the heights of a great passion. They find their amusement rather in arousing one and watching its antics.

FELICIA mine, you write to me about settling down, striking rather a blank note. You've fallen in love and been engaged and married, gone on your honeymoon and had a baby. Now one would almost think, reading between the lines, that the years draw nigh when thou shalt say "I have no pleasure therein."

Felicia, does one, do the best people ever settle down?

You sound as if you stood looking into the grave of your youth—a girl's lovely, lovely youth when she's all fire and splendour like trumpets blown for wars. I sit listening for three phantom volleys and the aching sweetness of the Last Post—those slow, ghostly first notes, the very essence of all farewells from the dawn of Time.

You mustn't settle down; you daren't.

Settling down is death on the instalment

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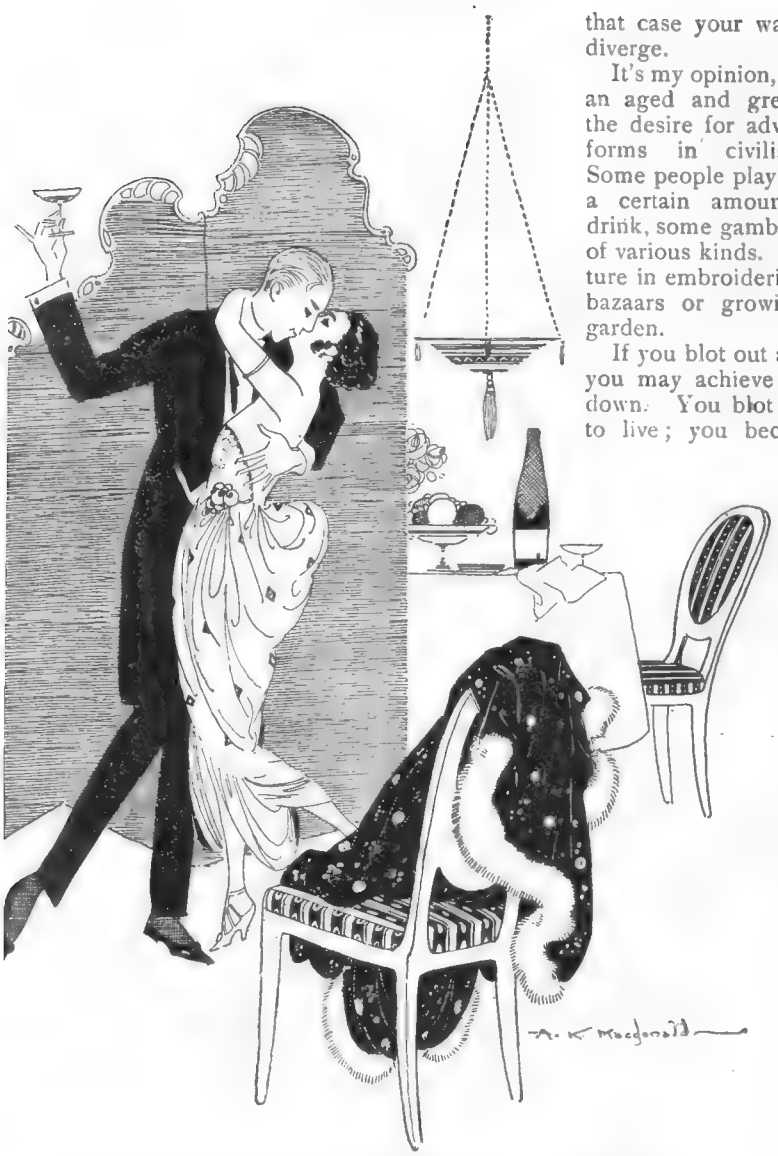

The desire for adventure takes many forms in civilised surroundings . . . some drink, some gamble, some make love of various kinds.

that case your ways must inevitably diverge.

It's my opinion, and doubtless I am an aged and grey-haired fool, that the desire for adventure takes many forms in civilised surroundings. Some people play games that include a certain amount of risk; some drink, some gamble, some make love of various kinds. A few find adventure in embroidering pillow-cases for bazaars or growing things in the garden.

If you blot out adventure from life you may achieve the art of settling down. You blot out also the desire to live; you become negative and negligible, because to do things is to adventure, and the unadventurous are sterile and accomplish nothing.

For this reason, Felicia dear, you must always be adventurous as long as you continue to exist.

Remember that you're a woman, and to women, after they're married, settling down is fatally simple. A married woman need no longer live by her wits. Before it was different; if she decided on marriage it was necessary to compete with others for a man. She had to be brighter, prettier, more amusing, smarter than other girls in order to excel and be chosen from the rest. Marriage puts an end to competition since the necessity no longer exists. Instead there comes a great calm, the calm of port after stormy seas. A newly married husband is easily pleased; in any case he can't very well get away.

Moreover, a woman's mind is swift to be absorbed, and to an extent satisfied, by small details, for your charming sex has not long been concerned with anything else. If you aren't very careful a hanky lost in the wash will cause you more pain than an international crisis. Housekeeping books, instead of being

ystem. You know what happens if any inanimate thing settles down. Subtly it egins to age; mould and moss cover it; a ind of impenetrable stillness pervades it and no longer matters. It blends so perfectly ito its surroundings that the eye can hardly istinguish it. In a sentence, it ceases to be idividual; it becomes lost.

If you like this kind of fate why, embrace , and God bless you. But do you like it? nd there is also the question of Philip, our husband. He may not desire to de into the merely picturesque and in

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A married woman need no longer live by her wits. Before it was different; if she decided on marriage it was necessary to compete with others for a man.

mere tallies of current expenses, are apt to become majestic figures in your life. You will find yourself passionate and overwrought concerning a baby's frock at 19s. 11d. The personal fads of your cook loom larger than the ten commandments. And all this, Felicia, is very sad in an intelligent girl.

These peculiarities, if you give way to them, are bound to estrange you from Philip, simply because men have acquired the habit of mopping up life's petty details subconsciously, in order to reserve their real energies for the job of earning a living and outwitting their rivals. For this reason, when Philip sees you call on high heaven because the fish wasn't delivered he will think you rather a fool, since fish isn't vital to existence. I know it's all very wrong and unjust of him, and you only worry about it because he loves fish, and you order fish in order to retain his affection, but he will all the same.

When you were engaged, you see, you never gave a thought to fish. You gave a great deal to the set of a hat and the cut of a frock. Consequently Philip would rather have eaten dry bread with you than all the fish in the Atlantic with anybody else. But if you settle down, as I tell you not to, this question of fish—or whatever it is—will absorb you to the exclusion of that lure of the senses which is the only thing really important to a woman. Your mind will wander from the conversation to the fishmonger and make you talk like a little ass. Your face will acquire the housewifely look, and that is death. You'll have an appearance of worthiness, and that's damnation.

(Do you still dream of settling down, Felicia?)

So for goodness' sake if you want to make marriage a success beware of drowning yourself in small routine matters. Any fool can housekeep if she has enough money, and no one can if she hasn't. You wouldn't hold your breath over choosing clothing for a valuable horse, so why hold it over the choice of clothes for a baby? I don't want to be unkind, but reasonable care is quite enough in either case. What you need really to worry about is the choice of your own clothes.

You see, dear old thing, the only way to keep a man, whether he's your husband or not, is to keep him interested, keep him

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hrilled and keep him guessing. The touch of adventure is essential for either or all, and if you settle down there won't be any adventure as far as you're concerned. You'll become an accepted fact, like the late of the Battle of Hastings or the dining-room wall paper. If you can love Philip better than anybody else and remain an everlasting adventure, you'll do. But you can't settle down as well.

If men settled down it wouldn't matter, but they never do. It would be fatal to them if they did, for the man who won't adventure is a commercial or professional wash-out, because without adventuring he'll never get anywhere. He who takes no chance in life never takes anything else except the booby prize, and so men have to cultivate the habit of adventure.

Now, Felicia dear, when you were out after Philip's scalp, you, equally, went adventuring. The tactics you employed succeeded, and you wear his *chevelure* at your slender waist, so to speak. But it is written in the Book of Wisdom: "They shall take who have the power, and they shall keep who can." The tactics that enabled you to take will enable you to keep; but if you forswear them and settle down—well, the principles of warfare are eternal, and because you neglect them it doesn't follow that other women will do likewise.

Your aunts would tell you that Philip ought always to think this, that, and the other of you because you and he are married, and you both promised to do so and so, and he is the father of your child. But men seldom do what they ought to do, any more than women, and you have to concern yourself with what a man does, not what he ought to do.

(Always look on Philip as a man, dear, not as a husband. We all know what a man is, but a husband's rather an abstraction—a kind of mirage of all the virtues, that turns into a section of the desert when you get close enough.)

To aunts, as a race, the word married is much what the blessed word Mesopotamia was to the old lady—such a comfort, in fact. But it's no use for you to sit and dwell on this comfortable word and let it go at that, any more than you sat and dwelt on the word "engaged" or the words "in love." In this life we get what we deserve, so the thing to do is to deserve it.

Having arrived so far, darling, it is borne in upon me, as writers say, from the faint sub-acid flavour of your letter that Philip is showing mild signs of restlessness, tugging pitifully at the silken leash, turning his eyes rather feverishly to the East, where may rise a new Star. Am I right?

Well, the rising of new stars, as any astronomer will tell you, occurs periodically in the heavens, and whether it's subject to any law or not, the encyclopædia may be able to inform you, but I can't. But the rising of new stars on earth can generally be traced to what coroners' juries call "natural causes." If I'm right in your case, you ought to know better than I do what the natural causes are. If you do know, the best thing is to remedy them; if you don't know, the best thing is to find out, when knowledge, as ever, will be power.

A long, weary life leads me to suspect that a certain Gamaliel mentioned in the Scriptures had the truth of the matter in him when he observed of a certain situation: "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." It sounds rather like the gospel of masterly inactivity, but if Philip is wandering after strange goddesses, nothing is more precious to you in the way of a precept, once you've found and remedied those natural causes.

For if you overwhelm him with reproaches he'll get very bored, and it looks as if he were bored already; hence the trouble. I'm afraid you must lay the blame on your passion for settling down, and revert to the manners and customs of your spinsterhood.

There's just one other thing to account for the sub-acid flavour mentioned above, and that is that for you, not Philip, a new planet of love has arisen. In that case you have my very sincere congratulations. Felicia, because the practice of settling down will now cease forthwith.

I think these new planets are so good for the married girl. After all, an attractive young woman is rather like a challenge cup; she ought really to be won three times before she's won outright. The names of the competitors should be engraved on her heart instead of on a neat silver plate, and when she's ninety-seven, not out, this list of exceeding proper men who strove for her will be very grateful and comforting.

I shouldn't advise you to take your new star too seriously unless you feel he really *is* the goods and Philip a mistake, because to a woman the admiration, the worry and trouble taken over her, and the soft stuff generally are more than the particular manifestant who provides them. She values these things for their tonic effect. Few, very few, women rise to the heights of a great passion. They find their amusement rather in arousing one and watching its antics, and I suppose

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Reasonable care in the choice of clothes for the baby is quite enough. What you need really to worry about is the choice of your own clothes.

really these must be frightfully funny to watch.

You'll be able to live your pre-engaged days over again and see the standards of warring factions rock around your triumphant chariot, for the advent of a rival will not fail to stimulate Philip however much he may be inclined to take you for granted. There may even arise bloodshed, Felicia—beautiful thought!—for Philip is a large lad, and I can quite imagine him, in a fit of irritation, chucking someone out of the window and saying all those lovely catchwords about *my* house and *my* wife that sound awfully well, even if *you* know better.

Felicia, dear heart, never mind anything. Even the weariest river winds somewhere safe to sea, and you're not very weary yet, are you? It's only a mood of yours, and to-morrow morning you'll wake up with the sunshine snared in your hair and the stars in your eyes, the strangeness of the luring West in your voice and all Paradise in the touch of your hand.

We've talked of so many things, and played, and fallen out, and fallen in again together, and now I must go. Never forget that what has been will be, and there's always to-morrow waiting beyond the hill top, a new adventure, a new heaven and a new earth.

"Yes, the old lost stars wheel back, dear lass,
That blaze in the velvet blue;
They're all old friends on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail,
They're God's own guides on the long trail,
The trail that is always new."

Yours,
BILL.

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NO DALLYING!

All was rush and bustle in the studio when the new producer began to get busy.

Turning suddenly to the weary "star," who was resting after the last stunt, he cried:

"We'll begin on the next episode now. It ought to be a thriller. You're blown up into the air by an explosion, and an aeroplane rushes along and catches you."

"It does, does it?" exclaimed the actor. "But, look here. Supposing the aeroplane isn't there?"

But the film-producer's thoughts were already far ahead.

"Oh, that's all right!" he snapped absent-mindedly. "In that case, just come down; don't wait for it!"

KEEP KICKING!

He was a professional footballer in one of the wild parts of America. He gathered a crowd of the cowboys, picked up two sides, and explained one half was to kick one way, the other half the opposite way, finishing lamely with:

"If you can't kick the ball, kick your opponent. Now where's the ball?"

"Never mind the ball," said one enthusiast, "let's get on with the game."

TRY A TABLESPOON!

After making the eighth stop and remaining in the station for twenty minutes, the branch-line train still showed no signs of going on. At last a passenger thrust his head out and shouted to the guard: "I say, guard, whatever are we stopping here so long for?"

"The engine's taking in water," replied the guard sleepily.

"Well," said the exasperated passenger, "tell them to use a larger spoon!"

A CAPITAL OFFENCE.

Little Phyllis was saying her prayers. "And, please God," she begged, "make Rome the capital of Denmark."

"Oh, Phyllis," exclaimed her mother, "why do you say that?"

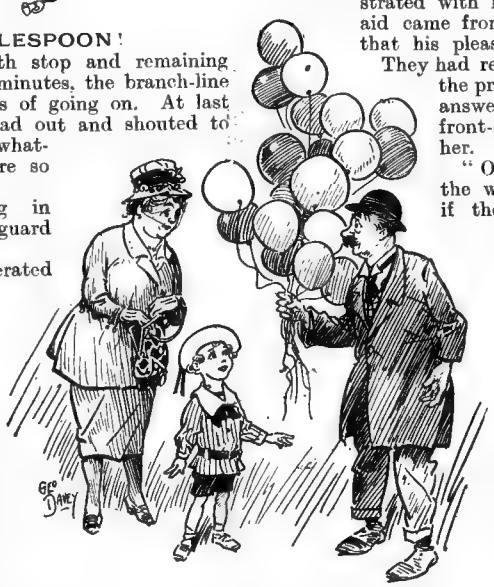
"Because I put it like that in my examination paper to-day."

SHE LOOKED THE PART!

She was one of those women who always present a woefully untidy appearance during the early part of the day. In vain had her husband remonstrated with her, and it was not until aid came from an unexpected quarter that his pleas prevailed.

They had removed to a new house on the previous day, and when she answered the summons of the front-door bell a woman awaited her.

"Oh, I'm too late!" sighed the woman. "I called to see if the missus wanted a charwoman, but I see she's suited."



STILL RISING.

LADY: "Sixpence for a balloon! What a price!"

BALLOON MAN: "Well, you see, mum, they're still goin' hup."

HITTING OUT.

An old lady, who had just lost her rather aggressive husband, was being consoled by the vicar.

"Don't grieve, my good friend," said the clerical gentleman. "No doubt your late husband is now striking his harp with the angels."

"The old tartar!" exclaimed the widow. "He's more likely to be strikin' the angels with 'is 'arp!"

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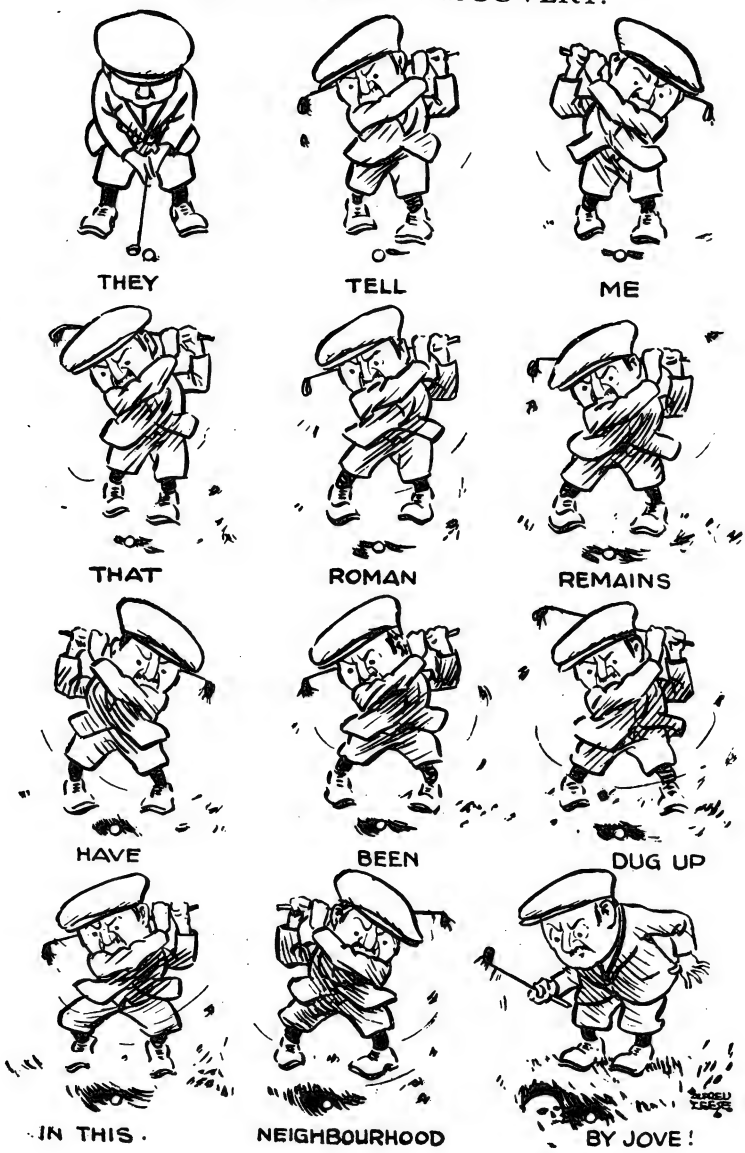
A STRIKING DISCOVERY.



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Ordeal By Fire.

A Touching Story of Love and Bravery.

By Dorothy Rose.

Samuel snarled. . . . "When you can show me a bank balance of £10,000 you can marry my daughter."

"You dare to ask for the hand of my daughter, you a penniless artist! Can you give her a house with twenty-three bedrooms, eleven bathrooms, complete with mangles, a Louis Quinze drawing-room, and a William IV. wine cellar?"

Samuel Puffington, the pickle king, wagged his chins aggressively. They had been furnished in triplicate. He had also three hairs.

Horace's dark eyes flashed. "I can give her love, and a glass of bottled stout on Saturday nights," he said. "I had a study of still life—two cauliflowers, a packet of custard powder, and a dead rabbit in a string bag—hung at a recent exhibition. I escaped with my life. I paint landscapes, too, pools with water in them, cows——"

"Cows! You can eat pickles with them when they're dead—but in pictures! See here, young man, I'm a self-made man; my pickles have been translated into thirteen languages, 3s. 6d. a bottle, fresh made for every customer, hand-sewn, sixpence extra. I started life with tenpence and a ha'penny stamp. Now I have half a million. What about you?"

"I've got the ha'penny stamp, only it's been used," said the artist simply. "Perhaps you would lend me the tenpence, then we could start level?"

Samuel snarled. He did not do it gracefully. He had never been to Eton. "When you can show me a bank balance of £10,000 you can marry my daughter. Until then good-bye, sir. Take a jar of pickles as you go out."

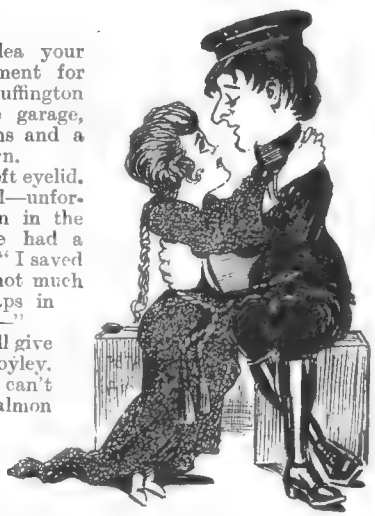
II.

"It was a beautiful idea your answering Dad's advertisement for a chauffeur." Catherine Puffington sat on a petrol tin in the garage, wrapped in her lover's arms and a crimson flannel dressing-gown.

"Yes." He kissed her left eyelid. She was only a slip of a girl—unfortunately the slip had been in the wrong place, and one eye had a decided list to starboard. "I saved 1s. 7½d. last week. I am not much good at figures, but perhaps in three score years and ten——"

"I will wait gladly. It will give me time to make another d'oyley. You are indeed a hero. I can't bear to think of you eating salmon mayonnaise in the servants' hall, while we have bloaters in the dining-room."

"They are good-hearted souls; cook drinks her tea in B flat, and I prefer C major, otherwise there is little to complain of except that Stella, the parlour-maid, has lost her heart to me."



Catherine Puffington sat on a petrol tin in the garage, wrapped in her lover's arms.

"That red-haired cat!" Catherine was on her feet—she was on his, too, but he forbore to mention the fact.

"Yes, she writes poetry—sonnets to my third eyelash; she's doing it now. That's her bedroom window." He nodded towards a light visible through the open door, but Catherine was already racing towards the house, pigtail flying.

She burst into the bedroom. Stella was sitting up in bed, wearing the rapt look of a poet and half-a dozen hair curlers.

"You wicked woman!" Catherine snatched the pencil from her hand, overturned the candle, and shrieked wildly as a flame caught the blankets.

"Fire! Fire!" she screamed, and fell in a faint upon the floor.

III.

"My new recipe for walnut pickles! It's in my safe. Will no one go and save it?" Samuel Puffington wrung his hands desperately. "Ten thousand pounds for the man who gets it. Must *I* risk my life?"

He rushed towards the burning house; on the threshold he collided with a smoke-grimed figure. It was the chauffeur. He carried the fainting Catherine in one arm, the plate basket in the other; Stella hung, depended by her hair, from his teeth.

He dropped his burdens into a flower-bed. "I will save the recipe," he said, and dived into the roaring flames. Five minutes later he was back, two shades blacker, but otherwise intact.

"Here is the recipe, sir, and your cheque-book. Ten thousand pounds, wasn't it? I brought your fountain pen."

Samuel Puffington took it. There and then he wrote the cheque. "Anything else, young man?" he asked ironically.

"Only your daughter." Horace lifted her gently from the flower-bed. A thoughtful fireman turned his hose upon her. She gave one gasp, and fell into her lover's arms.

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A GOOD TIME COMING!

It was getting late, and the 'bus conductor had had about enough of it. So when he asked the old lady for her fare, and she began the usual process of fumbling in her bag, he felt fed up.

"Hurry up, please!" he said, more in sorrow than anger.

The old lady went on fumbling for a few more minutes; then she held out half-a-crown.

"I'm so sorry I haven't a penny," she said.

"Don't you worry, mum," replied the conductor, with a savage gleam in his eyes. "You'll have twenty-nine of them in a minute!"

ANXIOUS TO OBLIGE.

The man who calls his stinginess economy, found that a big firm of fish dealers were offering to send a good parcel of fish for five shillings.

He quickly got a postal order and sent it off with a note, requesting "a cod, a few pairs of kippers, some smoked haddocks, a box of bloaters, and some salmon."

The next day he got this reply:

"Dear Sir,—

Your order with p.o. to hand. We note your requirements, but suggest that if you forward another sixpence we will include the steam trawler and a portion of the North Sea."

CHARITY!

"Ere, my dear, you can 'ave these. They pinch my feet somethin' awful."

NOT ON SPEAKING TERMS.

SYMPATHETIC FRIEND: "I hear you are having trouble in meeting your creditors?"

HOPPITT: "Trouble in meeting 'em? Great Scott! My trouble is dodging 'em."

LOGIC BELOW STAIRS.

LADY: "But it seems to me you ask very high wages, when you acknowledge that you haven't had much experience."

BRIDGET: "Sure, marm, ain't it harder for me when I don't know how?"

A FORGIVING SPIRIT.

"By the way, Edgar, what shall we give Lilian for a wedding present? She gave us that plush upholstered chair that's in the attic, you know."

"I don't think we'd better send her anything, dear. Why not let bygones be bygones?"

GIVING THE ALARM.

A doctor received a note asking him to go at once to a case of small-pox, but, to his surprise, on arriving at the patient's bedside, he found that he was suffering from rheumatism.

"But this is obviously not small-pox," he said to the man who had fetched him.

"Well, doctor," replied the man, as he shuffled one foot over the other, "to tell you the truth, we knew it was rheumatism, but nobody in the house could spell the word, and we thought small-pox would do just as well, and probably bring you quicker."

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STAYING POWER!

BETRAYED!

The proud owner of a new car—of a rather inferior make—drove up to his office, jumped out, and, according to custom, threw his rug over the "bonnet."

The inevitable street boy was looking on. "Too late, sir," he exclaimed. "I saw the name!"

BECOMING MODESTY.

Mrs. O'Toole was shopping when she caught sight of her neighbour's signboard, bearing the following inscription:

"Washing and ironing done."

"Wud ye look at that!" she exclaimed indignantly. "'Washing and ironing done,' indade. Oi've had me washing and ironing done since yesterday, but you don't see me hanging out a signboard bragging about it."

A SUBSTANTIAL LEGACY.

OLD MAN: "Ah, there's where my old friend Sandy McTavish lies. He left all he had to the orphanage."

YOUNG MAN: "Did he really? What did he leave?"

OLD MAN: "Five boys and a girl."

COURTSHIP.

A courtship should be short and sweet,
I really think, to drag it
On and on, is scarcely meet.
Don't grovel at the maiden's feet,
Don't beg a kiss—just bag it.

E. Skeet.

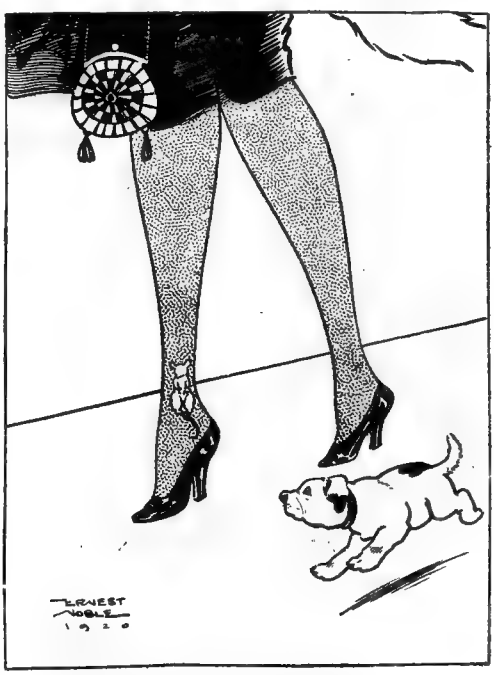
AND THEY ALL "FLEA"-D FROM THE ROOM.

The entertainer was about to give a performance of performing fleas.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "I will open the entertainment with 'James,' the champion jumper." So he went to James' cage and extracted that individual. After uttering a few mysterious words to the animal, the man said: "One, two, three. Jump!" And James jumped—jumped on to the person of the plump Duchess of Blankhampton.

After divers apologies, the man extracted the wayward creature.

"Now, once more, James!" he said. "One, two, three. Jump!" But no response. "*One, two, three. Jump!*" But again no response. After several such vain attempts, the disappointed man took out his magnifying glass and looked carefully at the creature for some time. Then, bowing very low and proffering the animal, he said to her Grace: "Pardon me, madam, but this is not James!"



POOR SPORT!

THE PUP: "The beastly thing doesn't even seem scared!"

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A GENEROUS OFFER.

"Go on, Mrs. 'Opkins, give him another. I'll 'old yer jug."
"Yer needn't trouble, Mrs. Smith. It's hempty."

LOW TIDE.

SLATTERNLY LANDLADY: "Did you ring?"

NEW LODGER: "So sorry to trouble you. Can I have a little more hot water? I unfortunately dropped my sponge in the bath and soaked it all up."

COURTING DISASTER.

MRS. NEWLY-WED: "Oh, Mamma, Jack threw a whole sponge cake at me; one that I made myself, too."

HER MOTHER: "The brute! He might have killed you!"

A SWEEPING ACCUSATION.

BALES: "I understand that he painted cobwebs on the ceiling so perfectly that the housemaid tired herself out trying to sweep them down."

SLADE: "There may have been such an artist, but there was never such a housemaid."

HARDLY WORTH MENTIONING.

A labourer approached the foreman of a large works the other day and asked for a job, but was told that there were no vacancies. Again pressed, the foreman had to explain that all arrangements for the day had been made, and no more men could be taken on.

"Well," said the man, "can't you stretch a point this time? You would never notice the bit I do."

NO ALTERNATIVE.

GLADYS: "Could you marry a man who is your intellectual inferior?"

NINA (from Newnham): "I suppose I shall have to."

THOROUGHLY EXPERIENCED.

"I should like to secure a place in your moving picture company," he said.

"You are an actor?" asked the film man.

"Yes."

"Had any experience acting without audiences?"

"Plenty. Acting without audiences is what brought me here."

NO FREE MEALS.

As she stood on the pier at a well-known East Coast fishing port, a young lady began chatting with an old fisherman.

"What are all those ships just going out?" she asked.

"Trawlers, miss," replied the old man. "They're just setting out to fish."

"And just look at the way those birds are following them."

"Yes, miss. They're gulls, waiting to pick up the waste food thrown overboard."

"Look at that smaller, greeny-coloured boat over there," she said, pointing to another vessel. "There are no seagulls flying after that one."

"'Tain't no use, miss," said the man sadly. "That's an Aberdeen boat!"

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Code Number Four.

By William Le Queux.

Illustrated by A. Gilbert.

This is a further complete story of a new series, relating the adventures of Claud Heathwaite, C.B., chief travelling agent of the Foreign Office, London. In these stories one sees Mr. Le Queux at his best. Cosmopolitan to the finger-tips, he revels in the mystery of diplomatic by-ways, the plots and counter-plots of European secret diplomacy, which he knows so well. These stories are the very breath of intrigue and romance.—Ed. R.M.

"You fully realise, I hope, Heathwaite, that upon the result of this very delicate mission with which I am entrusting you most momentous events depend?" said the Foreign Minister then in office as I sat with him late at night in his fine library in Grosvenor Square.

"I quite follow you, sir," was my reply.

"I am sorry to send you back to the Continent so quickly, especially as only this morning you returned from Stockholm. But, as you see, the matter is most urgent. You will recollect the name?"

"Yes. Enrico Linari, and he lives at Monte Rosso."

"That's correct. You will be compelled to exercise all the tact you possess in order to approach him. He will want money, no doubt. Here is a draft on the Treasury for five thousand. Take the money with you, and if you want more, telegraph to the usual Box at the General Post Office and it will be remitted to Mr. William Kelly at whatever bank you desire. Better use Number Four Code in this case. Your message will then come direct to me."

He drank his small cup of black coffee, an example which I followed. Then he rose and bade me *bon voyage*, after which Grain, the tall, stately old butler, showed me out.

When I re entered my rooms in Dover Street my man, Quaife, was awaiting me, thin, pale-faced, with high cheek bones, dressed in black, tailed coat and grey trousers.

"Look here, Quaife, I want to have a chat with you. Come into my room," I said.

The faithful old man followed me in. As servant to my late father through many years and at many Legations and Embassies abroad, he possessed a knowledge of diplomacy and those puppets in uniforms who represent their respective Governments which was perhaps unequalled.

"Sit down, Quaife," I said. "I want to consult you upon two or three points."

The old man seated himself on the edge of a chair, whereupon I said:

"You've a pretty long memory, Quaife. Have you ever heard of a man named Linari—Enrico Linari? Nothing to his credit, I suppose?"

"Linari?" repeated the old fellow, his thin hands upon his knees. "Linari? The name sounds a bit familiar, Mr. Claud."

"You may possibly have heard of him when you were with my father in Rome."

"Linari? Linari?" again repeated the thin-faced old fellow. "Why, wasn't he a Deputy—mixed up in the great Bellini plot which caused the downfall of the Ghelarducci Ministry?"

"Probably. I'm seeking information," I said. "Try to recall the circumstances."

The old man sat there much puzzled. He stroked his chin, rubbed his knees, and cast his deep-set eyes upon the carpet. At last he said:

"Yes. I'm not mistaken. I'm sure I'm not, Mr. Claud. Enrico Linari came several times to dine at the Embassy, and your father became on friendly terms with him. It was at the time of those negotiations between us and Italy regarding the Abyssinian Question. I recollect it quite well. Your father took a firm stand against the views of the Marquis di Fiesole, who was then Italian Foreign Minister, and the Deputy Linari, posing as a friend of Britain, gave him secret information which assisted him."

"But surely Linari is no friend of ours?" I exclaimed.

"No. Your father discovered that, alas!

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"Now," I said, "just drop that knife or I'll put a bullet through you, you blackguard!"
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when it was too late. The fellow, who had been bribed by the Marquis, learnt the intentions of Downing Street and, in turn, betrayed them to the Quirinale," was Quaife's reply. "I remember now how furious your father was. He told me so."

"Then I can treat this Linari as an enemy?"

"Yes, Mr. Claud," replied my father's old servant. "Beware of him! He hated your father for some reason; hence if he knows who you are he will hate you also."

"Thanks for the tip, Quaife," I said. "I shall know how to treat him, never fear. I'll have to be off to Italy the first thing in the morning," I added. "Are my duplicate bags ready?"

"Yes, all ready, sir."

It was my habit to keep a duplicate set of travelling kit ready packed, sufficient to last me three months, for I had, on occasion, arrived at Dover Street after long absence, and then an hour later left again with a completely fresh kit, even to a toothbrush. The rapid traveller finds that such arrangement saves much time and adds considerably to his comfort.

When Quaife had left the room I sat down and wrote to Myrtle Merriman at Elmwood Close in Cheshire, informing her of my enforced departure, and regretting that I had no time to run up and see her and her family. We were sufficiently friendly for her to understand it was my duty alone which called me away again, and not pleasure.

Then, after a rather sleepless night, I was early away upon my journey to Italy, by way of Paris and the Mont Cenis, on a curious quest.

Enrico Linari, of whom I was in search, had recently lived in London, occupying a fine house in the Cromwell Road, where he entertained lavishly, and was well-known in the Italian colony. He was very wealthy, he subscribed handsomely to the Italian Hospital and other Italian charities, and was probably the most popular man in the whole colony. A year ago, however, he had suddenly disposed of the lease of his house and returned to Italy, where his wife was living. His wife was in failing health, he explained, and as the doctor did not advise her to risk the damp and fogs of England, he had been compelled to rejoin her.

That was what the Foreign Minister had told me.

Now I was on my way to find him.

On crossing the Italian frontier two days later I took train from Turin to Parma, and thence on to old-world Ravenna down on the Adriatic coast, where I called at the shop of a man named Fossi, a photographer, in the Via Dante. There, after a long chat and much explanation, the undersized little man promised to print for me by next day a copy of a photograph he had taken of Enrico Linari about three years before.

"The Signor Deputato, who was staying at a Villa out by the Pineta, came in one day and asked me to take his photograph," old Fossi told me. "I recollect it because he was very insistent on having one print only of it, and that the negative should be destroyed. I promised to do this. But the request struck me as rather peculiar, so, having made the single print, I smashed another negative, splintering it out of all recognition, and this I showed to him as that of his own picture. He was satisfied, paid, and went away. And now you, signore, come and want a print! Why?" he asked with keen curiosity.

"Well—because I am anxious to have one as a souvenir. The Deputato once did me a very great kindness in London."

"Ah! And you want his photograph to keep—eh?" remarked the old Italian. "I see. But you will never say that I printed it, will you?"

"I promise I will not," I replied. Therefore when I called on the following day and gave him thirty-five lire he handed me the cabinet photograph of a middle-aged, rather good-looking man, with shrewd, somewhat protruding eyes, a straight nose, and a closely clipped beard. In his cravat he wore a tiny Egyptian scarab as scarf pin.

That same evening I left Ravenna and, after spending the night in a *wagon-lit*, alighted in the morning sunshine in that most delightful of the old-world Tuscan cities, Siena.

After a wash at the Continental I consulted the burly concierge as to the whereabouts of the village of Monte Rosso.

"Monte Rosso, signore, is high up beyond the Val d'Elsa, about fifty kilometres from here. The best way is to hire an automobile to take you to Casole and afterwards take a *vettura*. A motor-car cannot go up the steep, rough path which leads to the village. It is too dangerous."

"Is the approach very difficult?"

"Very," was the man's answer. "A French artist who was here last year went there to paint and told me what a toilsome journey it was from Casole. It's right out in the mountains."

"Well, I must go." I said, and an hour later, leaving my bags at the hotel, I was in a car driving through that white winding road, with wonderful views, fringed with vines, olives and ginestra, which led through

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San Galgano and Rosia, and then mounting high over the picturesque Montagnola, descended steeply into the beautiful valley of the Elsa. At Casole, a little town far from the railway and entirely "off the map," I hired the ramshackle old fly, the brigand-like driver of which told me it would take at least two hours and a half to three hours to reach Monte Rosso, at the same time evidently full of wonder what business took me to that remote spot.

We were standing in the little piazza of Casole, from one side of which spread a beautiful panorama of valley and mountain.

"See, signore," he said, pointing to a small cluster of white houses, with the square tower of a church high up upon a conical hill in the far distance, "there is Monte Rosso! That's the tower of the *convento*."

"Do you know a signore named Linari who lives there?"

The man shook his head. He knew most people in Monte Rosso, for he acted as carrier twice each week between Casole and that place, but he had never heard the name.

So, after a glass of excellent Montepulciano from a big rush-covered flask, we set out upon our slow and painful journey with two screws of horses which were badly tormented by the flies.

The smiling land was one of peace and plenty, a bright, fruitful land with its rich tracts of maize and olives, while its vines were laden everywhere with fruit, for the vintage was near at hand.

The *contadini* were brown-faced and laughing, and often exchanged greetings with me as we passed. That remote part of Tuscany is still the same happy spot it was in Dante's day, unchanging and delightful in its primitiveness and its aloofness from the strain and hurry of modern life.

As we went along I drew the photograph of the ex-Deputy from my pocket-book and gazed long and earnestly upon it, so as to rivet the features in my memory. In that same pocket-book I carried Bank of England notes to the value of five thousand pounds odd.

The sun was already declining when, finishing the journey on foot up the steep, rough road, I found myself in the little piazza of the obscure village where a group of men and women were gossiping, as is the Italian habit.

"Where does the *Sindaco* live?" I inquired of one of the men.

"Over yonder, signore," replied the beetle-browed peasant, pointing with his strong brown hand to a small house, over the door of which was nailed a small escutcheon bearing the arms of Italy. "But he is away in Firenze. He left this morning."

"Where is the *piovano?*" (parish priest).

"In his house, next to the church. Down there on the left," was the reply.

I went in the direction indicated and soon came to the parish church, an ancient fifteenth century, sun-blanched structure with squat belfry and the usual clanging bell. At the house adjoining I rapped and an old woman led me into a cool courtyard where, under a great magnolia, sat the old parish priest in his rusty black, smoking a long "Toscano" cigar and reading the *Corriere* through his big horn spectacles.

I apologised, and told him that I was a wandering stranger in search of Signor Linari.

The priest, a delightful old fellow, as so many parish priests in Italy are, looked me straight in the face and said:

"Ah! I suppose you mean the Count Linari-Marchetti—eh, signore?"

"Probably so."

The man in the black cassock grunted. It was clear that he suspected me. Knowing the Italian as I do, I hastened to reassure him.

"I have a little piece of business with the Count," I said, unaware that he was really of the nobility, but being fully aware of the ease with which the Italians can assume a title when they have money. And it had been proved that Signor Linari was wealthy during his sojourn in London.

"*Benissimo!*" said the priest, taking out his great brown snuff-box and sniffing a huge pinch. "You will find him at the Villa Bertini, just up the hill-side—the white house beyond the short avenue of cypresses."

"Now, signore," I said in Italian in a changed voice, "first, I thank you for your information. I came to you because I heard in Siena the reputation of this village—a bad lot they say, and——"

"Signore!" he interrupted, raising his big hands from his knees, the cigar still in his mouth. "Bad? Alas, they are! The stranger believes this to be a little bit of Paradise, but I can tell you in confidence that behind it all these people are utterly unscrupulous, and many of the men will not hesitate to take a life for a hundred francs. I have lived among them for ten years—and I know. I have heard confessions."

"But the Count Marchetti-Linari? What reputation does he bear?"

The round-faced old priest shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"Very rich—that is all. He has recently returned from England and come here.

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Curious that an extremely wealthy man should live in a small house like the Villa Bertini."

"Ah! So there is some mystery concerning him—eh?"

"I think so. But, of course, it is not my place to make any comment, signore."

The parish priest of Monte Rosso was typical of parish priests in that sunny, southern land. He was well educated in everything appertaining to church matters, but a veritable child as regards the world's affairs. In his buckled shoes and long cassock he sat and devoured the *Corriere*, and took his views of life from that estimable journal. He ate good food, he drank good red wine, and he clasped his hands over his stomach and roared when any of the peasants told him a good joke.

Whatever may be said, your parish priest in Italy is always a good fellow. The *Sindaco* of a village, as representative of the Prefecture, is too often a jack-in-office, a man who has made money in America, in France, in England, and has returned to his native spot in order to rule it by printed orders stuck upon the walls of the place. But the *piovano* is ever a diplomat. He hears the confessions of the villagers, and thus he knows far more than ever the syndic knows.

"So Count Linari is a bit of a mystery," I laughed, speaking in Italian.

"Not to the village. He is a very estimable gentleman," said the old priest, puffing at his long cigar. Priests smoke half a Toscano at a time—never a whole one. It has to be dried out by the flame of a candle before it can be lit—quite a religious process. "They say he made a pile of money in America during the war. And I believe he lived in London for some little while."

"And his wife?"

The *piovano* shrugged his shoulders, and his round, fat face relaxed into an expressive grin.

"She is not here. He speaks of her, but we have never seen her."

"He comes here and chats with you, of course?" I said, for the priest was practically the only educated person in the little place.

"Very rarely. He lives the life of a recluse."

"A recluse! Why?"

"He has been in ailing health ever since he came here. Enrichetta, his old *donna di casa*, told me only last week that she thinks her *padrone* is sometimes failing in his mind."

"And so rich, too!" I remarked.

The parish priest of Monte Rosso, the stout, rubicund cleric in the rusty cassock, looked me full in the face—very strangely, I thought.

"Now, signore, pardon me!" he exclaimed. "But let us understand each other. Why are you here?"

I evaded the question for a few moments; then returning his glance, I said:

"I can speak to you in confidence, *Reverendo?*"

"Of course, caro signore. I shall not abuse your confidence, as I hope you know."

"Well," I said, "I have been sent here upon a mission for the British Government to this individual—a delicate and confidential mission."

The old priest grunted, and tapping his ancient snuff-box, took another prodigious pinch.

"I don't wonder at it. *Santa Madonna!* he's a mystery. But," he added, "be careful. He is a very slippery fellow. I have heard some strange things—facts which I cannot repeat. Take care of yourself—that's my warning, signore! He was a popular Deputy before the War, but he retired—perhaps on the money he made during his political career. Ah! Our poor Italy is strangled by the dishonest politician who becomes a Minister. Scratch a Minister and you discover a thief. The law which breeds politicians, alas! cannot help propagating the thieving class."

I agreed with him, and then made my way in the golden sundown to the Villa Bertini, a small house with closed green *persiennes*, standing on the side of the hill, half a kilometre outside the village and half-hidden by dark, funereal cypresses.

As I approached I saw that it was an ancient and somewhat dilapidated place surrounded by a neglected garden where flowers and weeds ran riot, and the green lizards darted among the stones as I passed. In the trees everywhere sounded the sharp "crick" of the *cicale*—the harbinger of the fiery heat of the Tuscan summer.

The door, the paintwork of which was sadly blistered by the sun, stood slightly ajar, and as I approached I was met by Enrichetta, the old Italian serving-woman, with a kerchief on her head and a big white apron.

I inquired for the Count, whereupon she became evasive. She would go and see if he had not gone out.

The card I gave bore the name of Julius J. Eastman, with an address in Sedgwick Avenue, New York City.

A few moments later I was ushered into a small, cool room which, the sun shutters

["CODE NUMBER FOUR" continued overleaf.]

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being closed, was rather dim, and a tall, good-looking man in a white linen suit greeted me.

The room was rather poorly furnished. The floor was of tiles enamelled to imitate mosaic, and the furniture was of that cheap, inartistic pattern which one finds in modern middle-class Italian homes. His environment was vastly different from the fine house in the Cromwell Road which he had leased from the widow of a famous King's Counsel.

I apologised for disturbing him, and then approached the subject boldly.

"The truth is, Count, I am a stranger in these parts, but I was particularly anxious to make your personal acquaintance," I said in my best Italian, though I knew he spoke excellent English.

"Why?" he asked in the latter language.

"Because I have heard of you—how popular you have been in London and how deeply everyone in the Italian colony regrets your departure."

"Yes. I had a very pleasant time in London," he said.

"I can quite believe it, Count," I said, smiling. "Everyone at the Embassy and at the Consulate is still loud in your praises."

"And is that the reason you have come up to this out-of-the-world place to find me?" he asked rather suspiciously.

"No. It is not, Count," was my prompt reply. "I think it is better to be quite frank with you. It will save a lot of bother hereafter."

"Frankness always pays in the long run," he agreed.

"Well," I said, as in the dim light I fixed my gaze upon his dark, deep-set eyes, "the fact is I am an enthusiastic collector of autographs."

"Autographs?" he echoed, evidently puzzled as to my meaning.

"Yes. I travel far and wide in Europe and America, and wherever I can discover the autographs of famous people I always endeavour to purchase them. As a matter of fact, that's my business. I buy and sell autographs. I can supply you with the illegible scribble of a modern author at two dollars and I can give you the signatures of Louis Quatorze, Napoleon, Peter the Great, Talleyrand, Charles the First of England, Marwood the hangman or Crippen the poisoner, at varying prices according to their rareness."

"I don't want any autographs."

I paused and, looking him straight in the face, said boldly:

"No. But you have some autographs—three of them—eh? And I am prepared to buy them. Now, what's the figure?"

He started visibly.

"What autographs?" he asked in a strange, breathless tone.

"Certain autographs," I said. "I surely need not be more explicit."

"And, pray, how do you know?" he asked with knit brow, while he fidgeted uneasily in his chair.

"Never mind how I know, Count. That doesn't enter into the question. I am, however, aware that you are open to negotiate for the sale of these extremely interesting autographs."

"Why do you wish to acquire them?"

"To add to a collection."

"To sell them again—at a profit—eh?" he snapped.

"Not at all. I am buying them for—well, for a client who is an enthusiastic collector—a rich client who is prepared to strike a bargain with you."

The Count remained silent for a few moments. Apparently he was still suspicious.

"Who is your client?" he asked.

"I regret that I am not permitted to give his name," I replied very politely. "I often execute commissions for him and he trusts me implicitly. You surely would not ask me to abuse his confidence?"

"Well—you can tell him from me that I am not open to negotiate for the three letters. I prefer to keep them."

"Yet only a month ago you asked two thousand pounds for them from a certain Labour Member of Parliament living at Liverpool, England. Is not that a fact?"

"How do you know all this, Mr.—Mr. Eastman?"

"I happen to be aware of it. That's all. Indeed, I have had your written offer in my hand. You signed yourself Benvenuto Graniani—did you not?" I asked with a laugh.

He saw instantly that I was aware of the true facts and that to deny anything was no longer possible.

He sat back in his chair and gazed at me for some moments without speaking. It was an evil look that he gave me, a hard, antagonistic glance which even in that dim light slightly alarmed me.

"You lie! You are no American!" he snapped. "What's your business with those letters?"

"I have told you, Count. I am acting for a wealthy client. I am here to offer you a fair price for those autographs," I said. "If I am correctly informed you gave fifty pounds

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for the three to a certain undesirable—one of the pests of the West End of London—a Dutchman. Perhaps it was best that you left London as suddenly as you did." I added in a meaning tone. "If you had remained many hours longer at Cromwell Road you would most certainly have received a visit from the police."

"Diavolo!" he cried, jumping up suddenly, seizing a heavy bronze figure from the side table and raising it threateningly. "Who are you?"

"Pray remain calm, my dear Count!" I laughed. "There is no necessity for any bad blood between us. I am merely here as the highest bidder for those interesting autographs which you bought—that is all. Now let us get to business. If you choose to attack me it will be at your own peril, so just put that pretty statuette down. You might injure it," I adedd with sarcasm.

He banged the bronze down upon the table with a fierce imprecation, for he saw himself cornered.

"Well, Count?" I asked quite coolly. "Now, how much shall I give you for those three letters—eh? Remember, you are open to negotiations," I added.

"What is your motive for obtaining them?"

"I have already told you that I am acting for a client."

"Ah! You are no doubt on the same game—eh?"

"You name your price," I suggested. "You bought them from the Dutchman hoping to make money out of them. Private letters are bought and sold every day in London, as you know. People's secrets always have some market value. So put your price upon the three letters and let's end the business."

"Well," he said at last, "I'll sell them for seven thousand pounds."

"I'll give you five thousand down—here and now," I said. "I haven't any more with me."

"Not one penny less. They're worth that," he declared emphatically. "I suppose you don't know to what they relate?"

"No," I said, for I was indeed in ignorance. My instructions were to buy them at all cost.

"Well, they reveal a nice position of affairs in the politics of your enlightened country. If published, they would create a revolution in England. I have had half a mind to sell them to an enterprising American newspaper," and he laughed.

"I can't give you seven thousand," I said. "I can only give five."

"Then, my dear Mr. Eastman, you will go away without them, and I shall sell them to the American in Rome with whom I am already in touch," and he grinned in triumph.

"Seven thousand is a big price," I remarked.

"It's a paltry one when you consider what must occur if they see the light of day in facsimile," he retorted.

"You buy at fifty and sell at seven thousand—eh? A nice ratio of profit, surely!" I exclaimed. "No. I'll give five thousand—or nothing at all."

"Then we need not discuss the deal further," he said, rising abruptly. "You are not an American, but an Englishman, and I tell you frankly I have no love for your country."

"Pardon me, but this is a purely business matter," I ventured to remark. "It concerns a purchase."

"If you do not give what I ask for the letters then I can get my own price elsewhere," he replied with a nonchalant air, adding: "I regret that you have taken all this trouble to find me here, and to no purpose."

I argued with him, but with an Italian's shrewdness he refused to take a single *soldo* less than seven thousand pounds in English money, remarking that the rate of exchange was so low.

Well, after half-an-hour's further discussion I agreed to pay him the sum of seven thousand pounds in English money, or its equivalent in Italian money, in Siena on the following Thursday evening. That day was Tuesday, and it would take me all my time to get it telegraphed from London to the Siena branch of the Credito Italiano.

He had a brother living in Siena, in the Via Campansi, just beyond the Lizza—that pleasant promenade so popular with the gay-hearted Sannese. He told me the number, and asked me to call there at six o'clock on Thursday evening, which I promised to do.

He did not wish to come to my hotel. There were reasons, he declared. I did not wonder at this, because I now knew that the ex-Deputy was being closely watched by the police on account of certain blackmailing transactions in which he had been implicated.

Not before midnight was I back in Siena, and the post-office being open day and night, I sent a telegram in Code Number Four to London asking for a remittance of a further two thousand pounds to be sent at once to the Credito Italiano. Then I went to the hotel and slept soundly till morning.

["*CODE NUMBER FOUR*' *continued overleaf.*]

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On Thursday, shortly after midday, I drew the money from the bank, and afterwards I sent a note round to the address in the Via Campansi expressing my regret that I had been suddenly taken very unwell, and, as it was impossible to keep the appointment, requesting the Count to call upon me or to send the important letters which could be given me against the sum of seven thousand pounds sterling.

The fact was that I hesitated to go to a strange house with such a sum in my possession.

The messenger, however, brought a reply that the Count would call upon me at eight o'clock.

Punctually at the hour named he was shown into my private sitting-room, expressing regret that I was unwell. He produced the three letters which, when I read them, held me aghast and staggered.

I verified them to be the documents I wanted—documents which were glaring and irrefutable evidence of the traitorous dealings of certain high personages well-known in London—and then I paid over the sum agreed, for which Linari signed a receipt.

The three precious letters I locked in my small steel dispatch-box, and then we had a cognac-and-soda together. I noted, however, that he seemed very uncomfortable all the time he was with me. He was evidently greatly apprehensive, but of what I knew not.

"I suppose you will now return direct to London? Which way will you go? By Pisa is quickest," he remarked as he sipped his cognac.

"No," I replied. "I have some business in Milan, and shall then get back by the 'Gothard.'"

"Ah!" he sighed. "How I wish I were back again in London, instead of being buried at Monte Rosso."

"Is it imperative that you should be buried in that remote mountain village?" I asked.

"No. Not exactly," was his reply, given rather haltingly. "But I felt I wanted a change, that's all. And now I find it far too quiet after all the rush and excitement of the London season." In the next breath he added: "What do you think of those letters I have just given to you? If your British public knew of them they would take the law into their own hands and prevent any further betrayal of their country."

I remained silent. It was not my duty to comment. Having scanned those letters, words had failed me. There had, in those moments, been revealed to me such a scandalous state of affairs as I had never dreamt of—and I firmly believed that I knew certain secrets of State.

The whole situation was truly appalling. Certain persons whom Britain had trusted implicitly and blindly had betrayed her into the hands of her arch-enemies, and of that I now had indisputable evidence.

"I really prefer to make no comment, Count," I said, utterly dumbfounded.

"Of course, Mr. Eastman, I am not blind," he laughed. "I know you are an agent of the British Government, whose intention it is to use those papers as weapons against their writers. Perhaps, after all, it was fortunate they fell into the Dutchman's hands—eh?"

"Yes. I certainly think so," I said.

"You do not deny that you are a Government agent," he said. "Now, how did your people become aware that the letters were in my possession?"

"Ah! That I do not know. Our Intelligence Branch must have made the discovery somehow or other," I said. "But, be that as it may, you have rendered us a signal service, Count, even though we have had to pay you a pretty high price!"

"You might have had to pay a larger sum if I had opened my mouth a little wider," he laughed, and then, shaking my hand, he wished me *buon viaggio* and left the hotel.

Four days later, at about nine o'clock in the evening, I dined excellently at Biffi's, that great café in the Galleria, in Milan, and drove to the Central Station with my precious dispatch-box and my travelling kit.

A sleeping-compartment had been reserved for me upon the Swiss express by way of the Gothard, and as soon as the train started on its lake and mountain journey I sought my berth and was quickly asleep. I had had a strenuous day, and had the satisfaction of performing the mission which the Chief had set me without a hitch.

I had secured a compartment to myself, though the train was, as usual, filled to overflowing. By virtue of a certain document which I always carry and produce when necessary, I had been granted the privilege of a King's messenger. In the rack above me was my precious steel dispatch-box enclosed in a green, much-worn cover, together with my suit-case, hat and stick.

I was awakened by the heavy roar of a tunnel, and knew that we were approaching the Alps. The light in the carriage was shaded, but as I opened my eyes I became conscious of a figure standing close to where I lay. The man's left arm was outstretched towards the rack whereon reposed my dispatch-box. In his right hand I saw something.

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Next second I realised that he held a long, sharp knife with which to strike me if I moved!

My heart beat quickly, and then I drew long breaths, as though still slumbering. Meanwhile my hand slowly crept beneath my pillow—very slowly until I felt the butt of my heavy automatic pistol. Then as slowly withdrawing it while the thief took down my case, I waited.

He bent over me to reassure himself that I still slept, little dreaming that the barrel of my weapon had covered him.

Then, as he turned to make his escape, I fired.

He sprang from the floor in sudden alarm, while I, on my part, jumped to my feet and covered him.

Then I tore away the little green cover of the lamp above, and the man, Linari, became revealed.

"Now," I said, "just drop that knife, or I'll put a bullet through you, you blackguard!"

The knife fell from the fellow's nerveless fingers.

"*Madonna santa!* Let me go!" whined the ex-Deputy.

"So you intended not only to sell those letters, but to get them back into your possession and to re-sell them to that American newspaper which is nibbling after them—eh? I judged that to be your game, my fine fellow," I laughed. "If you want a dispatch-box, you are welcome to mine as a souvenir. Take it as it is."

The fellow snarled and looked at me, much puzzled.

"I suspected your low-down game when you asked me by which route I intended to travel back. So I may as well tell you that I took the precaution to send those letters home by post as soon as I returned that night. Now," I added, "get out! Leave the train at the next station, whatever it may be, or I'll have you arrested. To the devil with you! Get out!"

And I slammed the door of the compartment after him.

Those incriminating letters, the actual contents of which I am not at liberty to divulge, were handed me by old Quaife when I got back to Dover Street.

That same afternoon, after the Chief had read them carefully, his grey brows knit in fierce anger, he applied matches to each of them in turn and burnt them in his ash-tray, thus preventing the exposure of one of the most amazing scandals of the political life of our Merrie England.

(Next month we shall publish another of Mr. William Le Queux's startling revelations of the underground politics of Europe.)

PUT ON YOUR THINKING-CAPS!

We want you to help us out of a difficulty. We are on the look-out for a phrase or couplet to advertise our three magazines, PEARSON'S, THE NOVEL, *and* THE ROYAL. *So far editorial brains have been able to evolve nothing more brilliant than:*

"*Read for pleasure after toil,*
PEARSON'S, NOVEL, *and* THE ROYAL."

We want something more inspired. It need not necessarily rhyme, but it must have what the Americans call "a punch" in it, which will draw public attention either to all three magazines or to any one of them. We are offering

£10 IN PRIZES

for the best attempts sent in, that is: £5 to the sender of the best phrase or couplet and £1 each to the five readers whose entries come next in order of merit.

Attempts should be written on postcards and should not exceed twenty words in length. Address them to "The Magazine Phrase Editor," 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C. 2. They should reach this office not later than Wednesday, December 1st, 1920. This contest is run in conjunction with PEARSON'S *and* THE NOVEL.

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The Second Thursday.

By V. Quirk.

"Was that you I saw at the gate last night?" asked Mrs. Heather, smiling.

"No'm," said Bythia.

"I thought I saw you indistinctly with a young man."

"No'm," said Bythia again. She collected all the plates on to a tray and walked out calmly.

Mrs. Heather thought she'd catch her, did she? Thought she'd trip her up about being with George at the side gate? But Bythia wasn't as soft as all that. She knew all there was to know about mistresses. Their relations had "admirers" and they were welcomed with open arms, but servants' young men were called followers and were strictly forbidden, like throwing papers in parks and spitting in buses.

But supposing it had been lighter and Mrs. Heather had seen her distinctly at the side gate? Supposing she had seen her in George's arms, giving him the despairing kisses of farewell? For the week of monotonous housework that divided her from their next meeting always seemed, at parting, like a black chasm that could never be bridged. Supposing Mrs. Heather had seen George run back to say good-bye once more, holding her face in his hands? That would have been awful.

For Mrs. Heather, being a lady, didn't know what being in love was like. Ladies didn't feel it like common girls. How could they? They had to think so much about their manners, and their eyes always looked as though nothing mattered very much. Besides, gentlemen like Mr. Heather couldn't arouse love if they tried. They were so lazy and distant and they treated their wives with politeness. Bythia decided that if, when she and George were married, he ever treated her with politeness, it would break her heart. She wouldn't be able to stand the insult.

Mr. and Mrs. Heather hadn't been married long and sometimes Bythia could hardly contain her contempt for them, they were so cold and mocking. Now and again they managed to be a little affectionate and then they played together like a pair of children. Bythia could hardly bear to see anything so unnatural. She, having bathed five younger brothers and sisters every week of her life since she was eleven until she went to service, having scrubbed and washed and sewn ever since she could remember, had left playing far behind. But Mr. and Mrs. Heather would tease each other and say silly things. They never had any of those terrible, beautiful quarrels that always end in a passion of reconciliation, like common people. They never, like common people, went for walks in the evening, their hands clasped, their fingers interlocking.

George always took Bythia to a dancing-hall on her evening out. It was beautiful. Bythia couldn't dance. She came from the heart of the country and her people were strict. They believed that cards or dancing could get you in hell quicker than anything else on earth, and Bythia had agreed with them. But after the manner of women, she put persons before creeds. So, because George described her parents' views with the one word "bunkum," she ceased to have any regard for them. And she enjoyed herself in the dancing-hall even though she couldn't dance. It was lovely to sit in her best frock with George, her hands clasped closely in his, watching the dancers and feeling sorry, in a contemptuous way, for the partnerless girls. She always said, when the master of ceremonies shouted out: "Now, gentlemen, look alive," "Go on, George. You dance. Don't you sit out for me." But she was always thankful and proud when he replied with a jerk of his head: "Not if I know it."

When they came home she insisted on saying good-bye to George further down the road in case Mrs. Heather, according to the custom of mistresses, was spying through the blind.

Next week, as soon as they entered the dancing-room, Bythia became aware of a dark, thin girl, in bright cerise, who was dancing in the middle of the room. She had large brown eyes whose whites were tinged with lovely blue, her hair was utterly black, her mouth was disturbing. She was thin but

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not shapeless. And her slight curves contrived, somehow, to look voluptuous. Her feet were impatient and small.

All the men were giving her surreptitious glances. Bythia felt glad of George's devouring love, and turned to give him a tender smile. But he, too, was looking at the dark girl.

Bythia's knees went suddenly weak. Her smile trembled. She led George quickly to a seat and sat close beside him, holding his hands in mute pleading.

The eyes of the girl in cerise were vague and humid while she was dancing, but as soon as the music stopped they grew bright and hungry. She kept looking round the room, probably searching out the most attractive man, and her glance lingered over George. Bythia held his hands more tightly and leant towards him frowning, in jealous ownership. Then the cerise girl smiled directly at George. It was a terrible smile, Bythia thought, there was so much power in it. It was more than a smile. It was a voice, it was a message.

She looked at George. He was smiling rather foolishly. The cerise girl passed by them, audaciously near. Her slim knees tapped disdainfully against her frock, which was slight and perfectly sufficient. She gave George another smile and Bythia a look which pronounced her to be of no account.

Bythia became immediately aware of her own absence of allurement, of her strong body and sturdy movements, her country skin, and light, sun-bleached hair. She visualised her pink cashmere frock, which was always kept in her tin box wrapped in tissue paper and touched with reverence and regard. It was lined with strong calico, to keep it, her mother had explained, from wearing too quickly, and its bodice was boned because, her mother said, her own bodices had always been boned. It was also very big to give Bythia room to grow. She had always thought it a beautiful frock, but now, with the frock of cerise before her, she thought of it with shame.

The music began again. The dark girl stood indefinitely by George awaiting his request for a dance. George moved awkwardly, aware of what she was waiting for. Bythia clasped his hands more tightly.

"I can't do new dances," said George feebly.

"Get up and I'll show you," said the girl.

George got up and the two of them danced together. Bythia couldn't see them clearly; they formed a blur.

Several times that evening Bythia sat alone on her chair, watching a blur of cerise and black float round the room. Once she saw the master of ceremonies go to a tall, broad, straight and exceedingly fair young man who stood alone against the wall and nod in her direction. But the young man shook his head sharply and remained where he was. And the blur still floated round the room.

Going home Bythia was quite silent. She tried at first to be flippant and gay, but she couldn't simulate successfully. Her laughter sounded foolish and her talk had no meaning in it.

Before he went George kissed her as usual, but she only received his kisses. She didn't give him any of hers. But as he was walking away she stood still, hoping he would turn back for another good-bye, but he didn't, he walked straight on.

Before going to bed Mrs. Heather remembered that she had forgotten to tell Bythia she wanted her to make breakfast half-an-hour earlier next morning. She went up to her bedroom. Bythia was kneeling by her bed, her arms were outstretched, her hands clasped together. There was a mark on the quilt where her head had been pressing and her face was twisted in agony.

"I'm so sorry," said Mrs. Heather, "but I forgot to tell you, Bythia, that we want breakfast half-an-hour earlier to-morrow."

"Yes'm," said Bythia.

"And—and I am so sorry I did not tell you before. Good-night."

All the week Mrs. Heather noticed that Bythia's face wore that same look of agony, disguised and controlled, and the next Thursday, the day on which she was usually visibly bright, she looked as people look when they are bearing intense physical pain.

Love gives imagination to the unimaginative. The imaginative find supreme happiness in several quarters, the unimaginative only in one. Bythia's living was domestic service, her life was George. Not only for what he was, but for what he stood for. She was anxious for wifehood and motherhood and the possession of a home. Her anxiety for these things was intensified by the monotony and the loneliness of her life. Cleaning your own house can be a rite; cleaning another's is a labour.

When she was dressing before going to meet George Mrs. Heather came up to her bedroom and talked casually about domestic affairs for a few minutes. Then she said: "Are you going out with your young man?"

"Yes'm," said Bythia ungraciously, disdaining to tell her usual lie. "But I don't bring him into the kitchen, and I've never given him a cup of tea in my life."

"But why not?" asked Mrs. Heather.

["*THE SECOND THURSDAY*" *continued overleaf.*]

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"And why don't you bring him into the kitchen? Where do you go on Sundays?"

"To the Park."

"That's splendid in fine weather, but I'd much rather you brought him into the kitchen when it's wet."

Bythia looked at her in suspicion. She didn't trust the false smiles and honeyed words of town people. There was always something behind them. What was Mrs. Heather getting at? That's what she wanted to know. What was she getting at?

"Where are you going to-night?" asked Mrs. Heather.

"To a dance, 'm."

"Are you wearing that frock?" She nodded at the pink cashmere frock that was huddled on the bed, thick, bulky, and belted at the waist. Bithya's body was Venus-like in its nakedness, but covered with such a frock its large graciousness would look merely clumsy.

"Yes. I'm wearing that," said Bythia, and the look of agony passed over her face again, undisguised, uncontrolled. Mrs. Heather recognised it. It was the same look that she had worn when she had been kneeling by the bedside, praying.

Mrs. Heather went out of the room and returned, saying carelessly: "I do wish you'd wear this blue affair. It simply hangs on me. And here's a petticoat to go with it, and a camisole."

She flung them on the bed, smiled shyly and with infinite softness, and went out of the room.

Bythia, flushed and dazed, crept to the bed and looked at what Mrs. Heather had described as a blue affair. It wasn't blue, though it was nearer that colour than any other. It wasn't blue. It was paler than an April sky. It wasn't blue.

Bythia picked it up and rubbed it fearfully against her lips. It was the softest thing on earth. And she was going to wear it. She was going to meet George, and she was going to wear it. It was more beautiful than cerise.

When she entered the dancing-room the dark girl was already there. She gave Bithya a look which betrayed at once that she knew exactly the difference between cotton *crêpe* and *crêpe-de-Chine* of the rarest quality. Bythia's heart rose actually. She felt it move. She smiled at George easily. She hadn't to make that painful smiling movement of the lips that expresses without tears the deepest sobbing. She smiled and smiled, and George gazed at her, absorbed.

They sat down together, and George reached for her hand. Her fingers were limp. She didn't let them curl round his, as usual. She turned around, still smiling, and met the eyes of the tall, broad, and exceedingly fair young man who was sitting beside her. He looked unhappy and angry, but he couldn't help responding to the warmth of her glance.

"Crowded, isn't it?" she said.

"Yes."

"But isn't the music high-class?"

"Yes."

She paused, exulting in the fact that, for the first time in her life, she had addressed remarks to a stranger and in a smart town manner.

"Been very warm, though, hasn't it? I——"

She was interrupted by a tug from George. He was looking at her in the way she had looked at him, she knew, a week ago, in humility, obedience, and entreaty, and with the suffering of the one who loves more for the one who seems to love less.

She laughed and turned again to the fair young man, and as she turned she caught sight of the dark girl leaning against the opposite wall, her cerise frock flaming against its greyness. She was looking as George was looking, but at the fair man.

Bythia understood. The cerise girl had had a quarrel with the fair man and had deliberately flirted with George, not that George had mattered or that Bythia had mattered, but to punish the fair man, to drive him to the height of anger, from anger to reproaches, and so to beautiful reconciliation. But the fair man was too angry, and the cerise girl, knowing it, was afraid.

Women clothe their rivals with unparalleled beauty and then behold it, tortured, with the eyes of the beloved. The dark girl looked at Bythia, fair, broad, pink-cheeked, and smiling, dressed in that delicate blue. She was similar to the fair man. She was of his kind. She herself was dark and thin and plain and hopeless. She was ugly, futile, and lost. She was sure of it.

Bythia's smile flowed through her veins.

"Are you dancing?" asked the fair man.

"No," said George, almost in a shout.

"Oh, hush!" said Bythia happily.

"What do you mean?" said the fair man, starting up.

"Nothing," said Bythia, with calm assurance, pressing him gently into his seat.

"Put your hat and coat on," said George. "It's too hot here. We'll go for a walk."

Bythia grew warm with joy at the tone of beautiful command that is never used in mere acquaintanceship or even in friendship, but

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only in jealous love. But she still kept turned to the fair man.

The dark girl pressed her head against the wall. Her misery was a visible thing. Bythia looked at her and met her tortured stare. Her lips were trembling a little, like a very young child's, and Bythia, seeing them, flushed slowly.

"Come," she said to the fair man in a husky, mother-voice, "I've a nice girl I want to introduce you to."

He got up, looking as though he might as well do one thing as another, and the three of them walked to the door.

"Wait," said Bythia to George. Then she led the fair man to the dark girl, saying with a maternal, tender smile: "I forget her name, but she's a lovely dancer."

The man jerked his head a little in passionate distaste, and was going to turn away, when the dark girl laid her narrow, nervous hand entreatingly upon his arm. Then they gazed at each other, and Bythia left them. But she heard him say commandingly: "Get your hat and coat on and come out. It's too hot here."

She went to the ladies' cloak-room, humming a happy little song, and looked about for her hat and coat. She heard light steps on the empty staircase, and soon the dark girl entered the room.

Bythia found her hat and coat and walked to the looking-glass. The dark girl went to her, held out a little powder puff, and said softly: "Would you like some powder?"

"Well," said Bythia, smiling kindly, "I don't think I'd know how to put it on. Wouldn't my Father and Mother stare!" She laughed a little.

"I can put it on for you," said the dark girl earnestly.

"Would you?"

The dark girl dabbed the powder puff in some scented powder and stroked it carefully on Bythia's bright cheeks, her whole body still as though it were concentrated on what she was making into an act of service.

"It feels lovely," said Bythia, with her tender smile.

"Would you have the powder and puff? They're quite new. I only bought them to-night."

"Well, now!" Bythia took them, understanding. "They're so pretty! And the scent in them!" She caught hold of the dark girl's hands. The sound of restless footsteps came up from the ground floor.

"Bythia!" called George.

"Yes," she said indulgently, "I'm coming."

She went downstairs and took his arm and when they got outside George said: "What was the matter with you to-night?"

"The matter?" asked Bythia in a surprised voice. "Nothing."

"You started being queer last Thursday. And all because I danced with that girl. What else could I do when she stood there waiting? I could never like a girl who'd do a bold thing like that, not like her to marry, I mean. All right to play round with till you meet the one you want for your wife."

The smile that illumined her face like a light prevented her from replying for a moment, but after the moment had passed she said calmly: "But I didn't mind your dancing with her, George. Whatever put such an idea into your head?"

"You seemed queer-like when we said 'Good-bye'."

"Queer? What a notion! I must have been tired."

"Anyhow," persisted George, "I don't like dark girls. They look foreign and they never seem to be properly washed. Now you, Bythia——"

"Yes?" said Bythia, in happy expectancy.

"You—you're just right. You're lovely."

"Yes?" said Bythia, shining. But a tiny thought tugged at her happiness. It was a fine frock that had given George this extra fillip of love. A fine frock! Not her mute entreaties, her sorrow, her agony and all the ardours of her passionate heart, but a fine frock. That was what men were like.

"But if you don't mind my saying it——"

"What?"

"You look nice in anything, mind."

"Yes?"

"It's not for me to say-——"

"No?"

"But I don't want you to wear——"

"Ah!" said Bythia, with a sad, bitter smile.

"I don't want you to wear that washed out floppy blue thing any more. It doesn't suit you, love. I like frocks with waists to them. You have such a beautiful figure. Wear that pink cashmere next time will you——"

He was interrupted and surprised by the suddenness and violence of Bythia's kiss.

They said good-bye in the old way and when Bythia was walking up the path she glanced through the side of the window that was left uncovered by the blind and saw Mr. and Mrs. Heather sitting together. Mrs. Heather was on a footstool and her head was on her husband's knee.

Bythia smiled rapturously. She thought it was a beautiful world.

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The Statuette.

By W. Denis Myers.

Peggy let the ash of her cigarette fall on a black velvet jumper, and got up hastily.

"Damnation!" she said mildly.

The afternoon sunlight streamed in through the dusty window and danced lightly over her glossy hair. It threw a crimson stain on the bare floor and it glorified the patched walls into tapestried marvels.

The statuette stood in shadow on a small table.

Peggy surveyed it moodily.

"Oh, well," she reflected, "it's finished, anyway. I don't suppose they'll exhibit it, but still——"

The stairs outside creaked.

"Don't knock," called Peggy brightly, "come right in."

Seeing that the cracked and drunken-looking door stood half-open, the injunction seemed hardly necessary.

The man who entered stumbled clumsily towards the gas bracket.

"Dreaming, Kiddie?" he asked, and, striking a match, he lit up the bleak room.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Peggy.

He grinned. "No," he said teasingly, "it's my brother."

Peggy tapped a small foot impatiently.

"Sit down," she said, "if you can find anything to sit on."

He crossed over to the wicker chair she was in and sat on the arm of it. Peggy, tilting her head back, looked at him steadily.

"Peggy," he said suddenly, "I love you."

Peggy showed a row of white teeth.

"I know," she said.

"Why won't you marry me?"

Peggy took his hand in hers and held it tightly.

"I don't know," she said gently, "at least—oh, Bobby, what's the use?"

Bobby frowned. "My dear girl," he began.

Peggy rose and leant against the wall.

"You see," she explained, "it's a hopeless proposition. You're earning about enough to keep me in cigarettes, and I'm not earning that."

Bobby looked serious. "Love——" he began fatuously.

"Oh, love, love, I'm sick of it," she burst out. Her eyes fell on the statuette and she softened. "I don't mean that," she went on hastily, "but love in a cottage—it's the old, old fallacy."

Bobby came towards her. She put up her hands defensively.

"No," she said, "think for a minute. You like the good things of life, so do I. You like good tobacco and decent collars and tailored suits."

Bobby glanced down at himself deprecatingly.

"I like good cigarettes"—she held out her case dramatically—"good clothes"—she patted her jumper appreciatively—"silk stockings"—she lifted her short skirt a trifle—"and excitement. I won't," she said decisively, "live in one room and be a drudge and rear puny babies and be called 'little woman,' and have to wash up and wear carpet-slippers and an apron."

Bobby was rather young. He snatched up his hat and went as far as the door, turned as if to say something, and, evidently changing his mind, dashed out of the room and downstairs.

Fiction might have made Peggy burst into tears and call him back.

As it was, she blew a contemplative smoke ring and pursed up her lips.

"Umph!" she said succinctly.

Peggy looked at the statuette. Eros, poised, seemed to beckon to her.

"Oh, rot!" she said, and pulled on her hat. Then she turned off the gas and went out. The light from a passing cab flickered on the statuette for a moment.

The door swung drearily on its hinges.

II.

Peggy's earliest recollections always included the punishment of being sent for a walk when, as a child, she had been sufficiently naughty to warrant punishment. And the habit clung to her all through later years.

Peggy, if her conscience told her she

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had done wrong, punished herself by walking. Alone, she would pace through the streets until the fresh air and the surrounding life would bring a dimple to her cheek and a smile at her usually inconsiderable folly. She would return, repentance on her lips and laughter and rebellion in her heart.

Following then on her interview with Bobby, Peggy walked swiftly along the streets, not caring where she went, and trusting to her life-long panacea to bring her to a reasonable frame of mind.

Past flaring gin-palaces she went, past cheap music-halls whose gaudy posters and tawdry brilliance seemed to beckon to all that was lewd and sensual.

A woman hiccupped across her path and a string of foul oaths issued from a dark and evil-looking mews. A child somewhere howled dismally. A youth, flashy and overdressed, turned to leer at the slim figure with the black tam-o'-shanter and the trim ankles.

The streets grew less mean and more crowded. Electric lights flashed on hard, painted faces and on elderly dissipation.

A man in evening dress stepped suddenly out of a doorway and cannoned into Peggy.

"I beg your pardon," he murmured, lifting his hat, then: "Why, Peggy!"

Peggy looked up.

"I don't seem——" she began doubtfully.

"To remember me? Surely?"

Peggy studied the grey bushy eyebrows and the thin, sensitive mouth, and then laughed.

"I remember," she smiled. "That exhibition!"

He nodded.

"Yes. Where you were exhibited and I, a well-known sculptor, was not. And where are you off to in such a hurry?"

Peggy dimpled.

"Hell, I think," she said wickedly.

"Meaning?"

"Carpet-slippers and babies and washing-up and"—she bit her lip. "I beg your pardon"

"But I'm interested," he assured her amusedly.

He led her to his car and put her in gently.

"Drive!" he said shortly to the chauffeur.

Peggy leant back and nestled in the cushions.

"You see," she began——

The car glided onward.

III.

The car stopped at the dingy house. The man and the girl climbed the crazy stairs and entered the miserable room.

Peggy buried her face in the roses she was carrying, then crossed to light the gas.

The man stood by the door watching her.

"I wonder," he said slowly, "if you know just how attractive you look like that?"

"Sure," said Peggy, without turning.

The man looked round the room, taking in every detail of the shabby curtains and the make-shift furniture. His eyes travelled back to the figure in the corner and roamed slowly over her. He noted with approval the slim white throat, the swelling curves of the young breast, the exquisite ankles and slender feet.

Peggy came across and stood, her arms akimbo, looking up at him.

"Well?" she said.

He caught her and drew her to him.

"Peggy," he said, "life calls to you "I'll give you life, leisure, comfort."

A shadow darkened the doorway. Peggy looked across at the door.

"Bobby!" she cried.

"Oh, damn Bobby! Peggy, girl, come! Happiness and love are waiting, laughter and music. Come and live while you're young."

Bobby stumbled in.

"I'm drunk," he said helplessly. "Oh, Peggy!"

Peggy put on her hat slowly.

"I'm sorry, Bobby," she said.

She hesitated at the doorway.

"Carpet-slippers and babies," whispered the man.

Bobby collapsed into the armchair, a stupid grin on his face.

The front door slammed. A gust of wind blew through the rickety house. The statuette of Eros shook, toppled from the table, and crashed on the floor.

The white fragments seemed like snowflakes on the ground.

IV.

The picture hangs over my writing-table. The man sits in the chair with what is meant to be a despairing expression and the broken statuette is at his feet. It is evidently a supplement picture from a cheap paper, and the correct attire of the figure, the expression on his face, which seems to indicate rather a fatuous grin than blank despair, make those who come into my office laugh and sneer at the picture.

What the artist had in his mind I neither know nor care. But the picture appeals to me and the story seems to fit in——

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Mr. Editor—His Page.

18 *Henrietta Street,*
London, *W.C.* 2.
12–10–20.

Christmas, etc.

This is the Christmas Number, and accordingly I wish you the compliments of the season. It seems rather early, but I will do it again next month to make sure.

You will remember Sir Walter Scott's assertion, "*'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale; 'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale.*" *Well, those were immoral, uncivilised days, and, thank goodness, we shall indulge in no mighty ale, chiefly because the poor dog of to-day has none.*

But there are certain merry tales in this number of which it is not for me to boast, seeing that I collected them.

Nevertheless, you won't do much better anywhere else, if as well.

The cover on this number is the first Helen McKie has designed for us. We hope it won't be the last. It's so cheerful.

A new serial by John Galsworthy begins in the January ROYAL. *It's a wonderfully written story of the human interest kind. A portrait of Mr. Galsworthy and full details appear on p.* 107 *of this Number.*

The Price.

Owing to the increased cost of production it is necessary to raise the price of the ROYAL, *and from the January Number onward it will cost* 1*s. instead of* 9*d. This is not a ramp; it simply can't be helped. You will remember that at one period during the war the* ROYAL'S *price rose to* 1*s., but in the hope that production would become cheaper we came down to* 9*d. Unfortunately this hope remained unfulfilled.*

Apart from the cost of paper, contributors' rates are all "up," for even writers and artists must live. But this rise in price coincides with the new Galsworthy serial, which is a very definite consolation for the expenditure of an extra 3*d. Moreover, if you glance over the list of contributors to this Number you will realise we really do give you the best there is obtainable.*

We are continuing this policy in the New Year. For example, a series of articles by Elinor Glyn starts in the January issue. The first, entitled "How I Would Bring Up a Girl," is full of interest for girls, their mothers, their fathers, and men who propose to marry girls. This is a tiresome way of saying it interests everybody.

Felicia.

"*A prominent clubwoman states that woman's besetting sins are envy, laziness, gluttony, jealousy, and revenge. Outside of that she is, we presume, the angel we have always liked to picture her,*" *observes the* Boston Transcript.

Perhaps it was for these sins that Bill wrote the "Letters to Felicia," which appeared in the ROYAL. *They are being published in book form, with the original illustrations, by C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd.*

I can't give the exact date, but with luck the book will be ready before Christmas. The price is 3*s.* 6*d., and you can order it through any bookseller.*

Don't forget to take home:

Every Monday - -	PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES.
Every Tuesday - -	PEG'S PAPER.
Every Thursday - -	SMALLHOLDER, SCOUT.
22nd of the Month -	THE NOVEL MAGAZINE.
1st of Month - - -	PEARSON'S MAGAZINE, THE WOLF CUB, HOME COOKERY.

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Photo Elwin Neame.

Finishing touches mean a great deal to a girl. A string of beads, a pretty hair-band—these are the choice of Miss Stephanie Stephens, the gifted leading lady in No. 1 Gaiety Company on tour.

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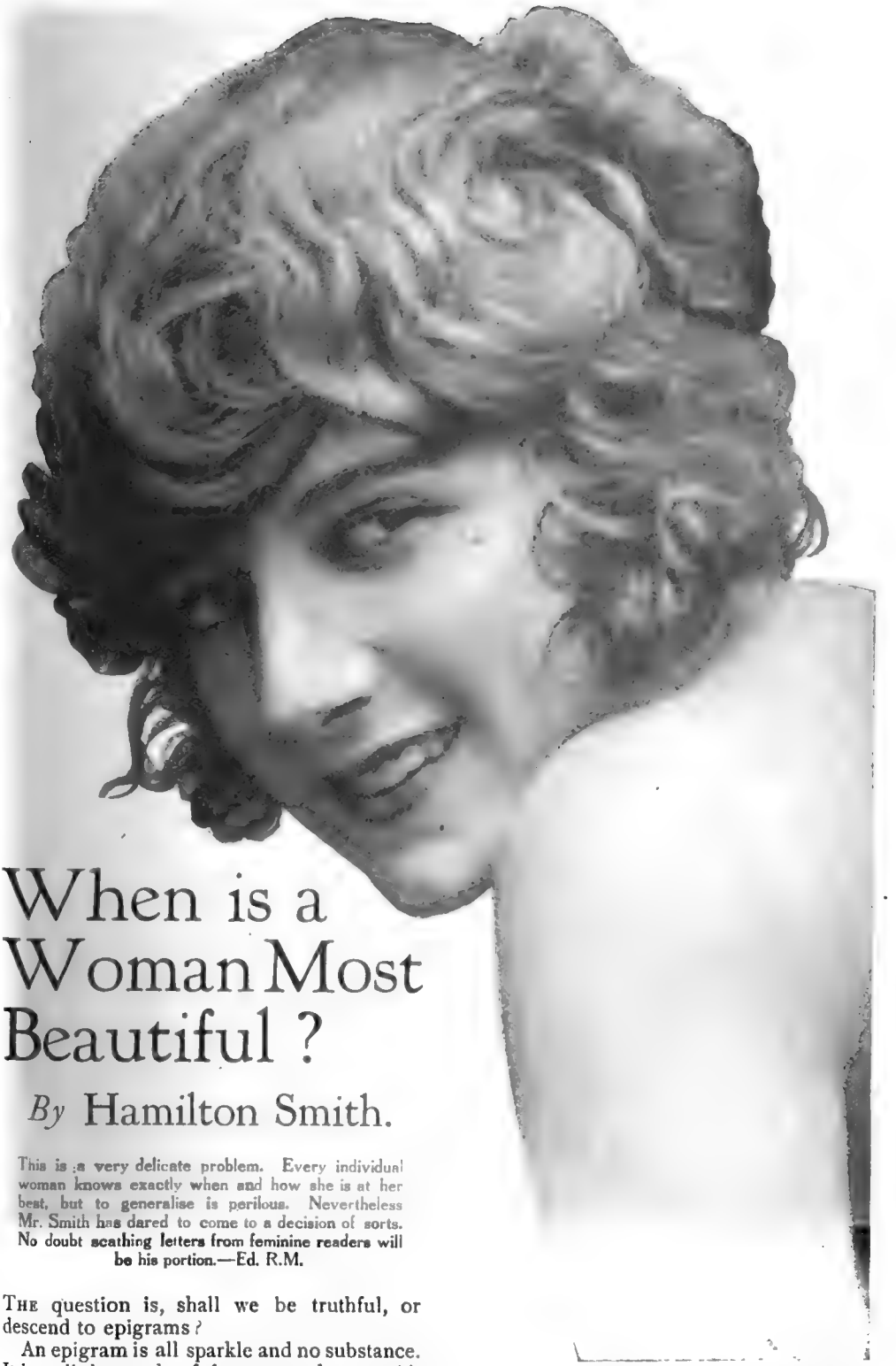

When is a Woman Most Beautiful ?

By Hamilton Smith.

This is a very delicate problem. Every individual woman knows exactly when and how she is at her best, but to generalise is perilous. Nevertheless Mr. Smith has dared to come to a decision of sorts. No doubt scathing letters from feminine readers will be his portion.—Ed. R.M.

THE question is, shall we be truthful, or descend to epigrams?

An epigram is all sparkle and no substance. It is a little speck of fact sugared over with bright words cunningly moulded; but some

Photo *Elwin Neame.*

A bare shoulder gives some women their chance to excel. Miss Alveena Anderson, who played in *Buzz-Buzz* and other revues, stands the test admirably.

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people like sugar, and they may not be altogether wrong.

For instance:

A woman is most beautiful when she is looking her best.

A woman is most beautiful when she is in love, or someone is in love with her, or both.

Show me a happy woman and I will show you a beautiful one.

A woman steals beauty from her clothes. She is most beautiful when she is silk all through.

the heart, not the brain, and happiness and beauty go hand in hand.

For a woman to be most beautiful, she requires, in the first place, a man to love her. Let all feminine subscribers take a firm grip on themselves and be very calm; it is not the man that matters, for men seldom matter to women. It is the fact that he loves her, and all the charm and romance of being

Photo, Elwin Neame.

Miss Ivy Close, now starring in the French film, *Rose of the Rail*, looks her sweetest in the frills and furbelows of olden days while——

The trouble is, all these scintillations come from the brain rather than the heart, and a woman's happiness, fortunately, arises from loved that matter. For this reason the actual love need not necessarily be too dreadfully serious, but the atmosphere of charm with

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which she is to be surrounded must be created most tirelessly by the man in the case.

Leaving out the mere technical details of figure and features, beauty in a woman is chiefly a matter of suggestion, hypnotism, faith-healing, or whatever you like to call it. A plain woman can never be so lovely from the cold, artistic standpoint as one who is naturally flawless, but beauty is more spiritual than physical. It arises from such qualities as expression, charm, a lilt in the voice, a light in the eye.

It is these which the ideal lover can create with his atmosphere of romance—sincere romance, that is. The mere philanderer can never call them forth. He is doomed to failure, chiefly because he is playing for his own hand all the time. He is doomed to failure, and serve him right. For a woman is only truly beautiful when she breathes the incense that arises from a sacrifice, however small—and sacrifices are not in the philanderer's line.

When a woman can say to herself: "He gave up so and so to please me!" she is genuinely happy, and, in consequence, beautiful. It sounds mean, but really it isn't. Her pleasure lies less in the fact that he gave up something than that he gave it up for her. If he could have the something and give it up as well, so to speak, she would be equally pleased. That this is physically impossible she regards as not her fault.

The truth of the whole matter is that a woman is most beautiful when she is being spoilt, petted, adored, and even perhaps kissed a little by some man who loves her enough but not too much. That is to say, he can love her as much as he likes, and when he leaves her (temporarily) he can tame the wilderness, subdue mountains, break his business rivals, and generally cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war. Actually in her presence he must never let the turbulence of his emotions destroy the delicacy of the romantic atmosphere—or at the worst but once in a blue moon by way of contrast.

It sounds mean, but really it isn't. A woman in certain matters is more logical than an adding machine. The right degree of emotion enhances her beauty as nothing else can. Great, unbearable emotions put lines on the face. Hence these are the indulgences of feminine youth alone.

Really a woman is most beautiful when she is in love hopelessly, recklessly, *à jamais*, for keeps. But the majority of women never are, and the immortal few think no more of the lines on their faces than of scars on the face of the moon.

Photo Elvin Neal.

—Miss Lily St. John, the charming young actress who made such a hit in *The Naughty Princess*, wears her very modern frock with real grace.

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To have said this much is to say all that is genuinely relevant. But on the utilitarian side certain truths deserve to be taken into account.

There is a great deal of beauty derived from other than spiritual sources—from gifts of the propitious gods—the physical beauty of feature and form. This is enhanced or diminished by the setting, and consequently the setting is to an extent all-important.

A girl may be endowed with the beauty of one historic period and live in another, when, except at fancy dress balls, she can only murmur with the poet:

"Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?"

That is just luck. The wistful charm and shy temperament that harmonise with a crinoline are wrecked in the brief skirt and severe lines of to-day. Equally the girl whose silky locks hang to her knee is lost amid the bobbed-haired throng, and she whose curve of shoulder might grace a Grecian robe may waste her sweetness in a tailored shirt.

Again, the dark, splendid beauty who demands the flaming colours that flaunt so royally beneath an Oriental sun may very well weep over the dull blues and greys of a northern clime; but what is she to do?

Ultimately all can take comfort from the fact that beauty of any kind is more precious than diamonds.

In this industrial, commercial, unpoetic life which we lead a mere grain of beauty may leaven a whole dull life, let alone the weariest day. To tired, disillusioned eyes the pretty little working girl, with a bunch of violets in honour of spring or a new ribbon in her hat, because it's her birthday, gives joy to dozens of dull hearts, not including her own.

There is no doubt that women prize beauty very highly, and will go to almost, if not quite, any lengths to achieve it. There is an infinity of kindly creatures who provide what Nature may have omitted, and market their wares in bottles, jars, little boxes, and other receptacles. There are also cunning practitioners who are the high priests or priestesses of very powerful jujus, makers of big medicine.

The former sell witchcraft in the

Photo *Elwin Neame.*

Those few and fortunate women who have hair as beautiful as Miss Gladys Cooper are at their best with it flowing loose.

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little bottles and jars at very large prices. The higher the price and the smaller the jar the more beautifying the product, is a truth faithfully believed in by women who are not so beautiful as they think they ought to be.

Hence, on Selina's dressing table reposes a wonderful battery of unguents, lotions, varnishes, astringents, creams, and wonders of all sorts. There is powder more impalpable than the dust on a butterfly's wing, rouge the bright, rich crimson of elephant's blood. (And anyone who has seen elephant's blood knows that nothing more crimson exists in the universe.)

Moreover, there is funny black stuff which, cooked over a match and applied to the eyelashes with a brush, hairpin, or other suitable object, gives the lashes a sable and stalk-like effect much admired.

The high priests and priestesses do fearful things that a girl cannot do for herself, because highly-skilled assistants are necessary who have undergone intensive training. These apply the permanent wave to hair as straight as a poker, or give the vibro-massage which fills up hollows where they oughtn't to be and takes away fat (sh l) where fat (dreadful word) is superfluous.

They may, again, prescribe curious exercises in order to sculpt unseemly figures into the way of svelte lines, but only the strong-minded fair are apt to persevere with these, because it's such an effort.

Photo Elliott Neame.

Eastern draperies enhance the beauty of some women, and embue them with an air of attractive mystery.

It is said that the simple country girls who (if they exist—the simple ones, that is) drink new milk and bathe in the dew become thereby more lovely than all the complexion specialists in Bond Street could make them. But this is only a story one is told. As a matter of fact the beauty specialists are reputed to drive a large mail-order trade, and the egg-money or the butter profits to contribute not a little thereunto.

Really, a woman is most beautiful when she is happy in the setting that suits her best.

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The Regret.

By May Edginton.

Illustrated by John Campbell.

FLORENCE stayed on in the garden although dusk was falling, and the dew in early April is heavy. She had had tea under the may-tree on the small lawn where the Darwin tulips, year by year, were always set out orderly in the dark, mounded beds. It had been a day of illumining sunshine, but now the evening was very cool, the sky pale, the little wind from the west no longer warm.

The maid had long ago come to carry away the tea-things, and now, against the lighted kitchen window, with the cook, glanced out often to Florence's still figure under the may-tree. They wondered why she stayed, why she did not go into the house, to the drawing-room, where a wood fire had been lighted for her comfort.

At last came a sound for which the whole house waited every evening, although it did not always come—the slam of the front door behind Florence's husband. He had returned from the City to his attractive suburban home.

Under the may-tree Florence heard the sound which she had listened for so many years, at first with the bridal thrill; after, with placid and secure expectation; after, with sharp and ferocious longing held, at breaking-point, in bitter concealment.

She did not move, but sat on, under the budding may-tree.

The master of the house, relieved of coat and hat by the attentive maid, went straight upstairs to his dressing-room. It was one of those prosperous but easy-going households where a man, returning from his day in the City, need not put on dinner-clothes. Hope did not. He brushed his hair and put on his slippers leisurely. There was no kind of anticipation about him. He found coming home quite a humdrum performance.

He went down to the drawing-room, and was pleased by the wood fire. He thought it was just right for the evening. The firelight over the chintz was warm and restful.

He thought idly, standing on the hearth: where was Florence? Out at that bridge club or late at some woman's committee meeting probably, wasting her time in the funny, harmless way women did.

His wandering eyes, roving to the window, caught a streak of white out in the garden—his wife in the cream serge frock in which she had come down to breakfast that morning—"in greeting to the beautiful day," she had prattled, while he had glanced at his paper. Silly to sit there when the dew was falling!

The maid came in to draw the curtains.

"Perhaps," he said, taking an easy-chair, "you had better tell Mrs. Hope I am in."

In a few minutes Florence came in. As she passed through the doorway she put out a hand to the electric switch and lighted the room.

She saw her husband sitting by the fire, smoking a cigarette.

She smiled.

"It's very absurd," he said, "to sit out on that damp grass, isn't it?"

"It was getting a little wet," she answered.

She advanced to the fire, putting one damp shoe on the fender. A little steam came from it. He said no more, and could not have defined the foolish, poignant thoughts in her mind. She wanted him to worry and fuss; to say, like the bridegroom used to say to the bride: "Your shoes are wet, darling! Change them at once. I insist! I insist!" She longed for him to bully her tenderly about her wet shoes. He said no more. She was certainly old enough to care for such matters herself.

She put a hand on the mantelpiece, staring into the fire. They had not kissed each other. All through the day the delight of spring had got into her blood, and her lips felt dry and

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starved. Slowly, for some months had accumulated in her the despair which to-day, in the illumining light and movement of the earth, had broken into a frank confession to herself of what she wanted—passion, the plant which had dried and died branch by branch till the very root had rotted away and was no more.

Her husband was stroking the back of his short-cropped head—a gesture he had.

"You have bought some logs," he said.

"Yes," she answered; "I bought five hundred."

"I like them," he said.

"Yes," she replied. "So nice for spring."

In a few minutes they were at dinner, sitting opposite each other at the small, square table, with candles and flowers between them. She elicited from him a sort of conversation; her questions, her tenders, were wifely and humouring. He replied good-naturedly. They were like two acquaintances on familiar terms, but from whose acquaintanceship the glow of interest and curiosity, all stimulation, has faded.

Whenever silence fell between them, the corners of her mouth settled into the droop that had now become habitual; her eyes brooded on objects on the table, in the far corners of the room. But once they came back quickly, diverted by some extra sense in her working brain, and found his eyes resting on her calmly, speculatively. She faced the look with a sort of fall of the heart, acknowledging it.

He was appraising her.

What did he tell himself? What conclusion did he reach—had he reached long ago?

As soon as he saw her, under her eyelids, catching his look, he changed it.

"It's been a jolly day," he said. "There were flower-sellers with daffodils and things all over the City."

"Did you bring me some?" she asked.

That the question sounded to him both stupid and unjustifiably plaintive, she knew. Yet she could not prevent herself uttering it.

"No," he replied, with visible patience.

Her mouth, her eyes, her poise were all plaintive. She knew it, and knew that men liked cheery women; that only when one was very young, or very beautiful—or, fortunately, both—could one thus impress the male heart. And yet——

She knew herself stupid, and yet——

He remarked patiently: "You have plenty coming up in the garden, haven't you?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Well, then?" he said.

She crumbled her bread.

The maid came in, hovering around them. Life was unreal. It seemed to Florence that many years ago she had stepped into a path that was just one long vista of flowery light; that year by year she had walked on; and that at last it had penetrated to her that the path had an end. She had approached the outer darkness beyond the flowery light; was staring into it and could see nothing.

It was the darkness of a passionate woman's middle-age. She was going forward, not of her own volition, into this darkness, and she had not finished with the flowers of youth. She wanted to turn back for them and could not.

She wondered if her husband knew. His appraising, cogitating eyes were not unkind. But they had a cool detachment. She would never bring flame into them again. Other women might—would; for a man's day was a longer day than a woman's. He was not old yet.

He was a man of middle-height, burly but not fat. He had that look of assurance, strength, and quickness that would make him desirable to many a woman younger than herself. Under her eyelids she looked at him across the table.

He did not want her any more. She knew that.

She knew, too, that if some other man had wanted her, she would not have cared much. But not to be wanted at all——

She got up as soon as the savoury was eaten and went into the drawing-room. She walked lazily, as usual. He would stay for a glass of port, and then, since he had come home, he would join her and they would talk pleasantly. She went to stand again by the crackling fire and looked into it.

She thought. But there was nothing to think about except the past.

Her husband came in with the entrance of the coffee apparatus. She always made coffee herself in the way he liked. She busied herself.

"Florence," he said

"Yes, Will?"

"Perhaps a change will do you good."

"I am very well."

"Are you? But you're restless. I am myself. It's spring, you know."

"Yes," she said, knowing how stupid she was; "we've been spring cleaning."

He responded pleasantly: "Oh, women are wonderful; always got some amusement for every season. Well, about this change?"

"You think I need one?"

"Everyone does at this time of year. I dare say I do myself. I'm—I'm going to run over to Paris next week-end."

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Her mouth drooped at the corners. Her soul looked out of her eyes. Her body was all tremors. But she said:

"Yes. Are you?"

"I want a change," he repeated.

These words broke upon her like a wave. He had often used them before, since he often went away, but never had they so summarised life as they did this evening. She knew — none better — that he wanted a change.

"Paris will be nice now," she said.

"Yes. And you, my dear? Don't you think you might go away, too? Do you good, eh?"

"This week-end?"

"This week-end."

"It's Thursday now."

"Well, what of it?"

"Nothing." She saw that Thursday made no impediment; only she was one of those women who had got fixed into a certain routine and so do no unexpected things.

"You've nothing to do," he said. "Go to-morrow."

"Where?"

"Anywhere you like. Want a cheque?"

"I have plenty, thank you."

"That's all right, then. Go to Westbourne. A nice, big, jolly place. Of course, everywhere will be quiet this week-end—the week-end after Easter. But you could stay at the Grand. Yes, I should go to Westbourne and stay at the Grand if I were you."

"Yes?"

"Well?"

"I think I will go."

"You'll be all the better for it," he said cautiously.

She went upstairs early. There was some slight appeal in the actual movement of packing her things, travelling down to Westbourne, staying in the great hotel on the sea front. She thought: "It is a good thing to get away; to break up this monotony. But I won't ask anyone else to go. No, I must get away alone."

She moved about her room, undressing slowly. It was solely her room now. Sometimes her husband came in to say good-night, and went out again. Her window was open, and the small wind from the west stirred the drawn curtains. She pulled them aside, and leant out far into the warm, dark air; she breathed it in; there were stars in the sky; flowers in the garden; the whole earth breathed and budded; she felt like spring too.

She went back to her glass and saw herself—the autumn woman.

It was easy to lean out of that window and see the heavenly spring. Here in the looking-glass, close and cruel, was the truth which every woman must meet. Propping her elbows on the table, she stared in. She had been a fair, slim, pretty girl. She was now faded like some fair girls fade, and plump—not stout—but completely mature. The clean contours of neck and chin were gone. The blue eyes were less bright, the hair losing its sheen. A complexion that had been roseleaf was pallid. She was now a rather pretty woman no longer young. She was not even one of those electric women who in some divine moment recapture the actual glow of youth. She was the woman who grows old and can reclaim nothing.

She sat and smoothed up the lost lines of her chin with fierce finger-tips. Hectic spots touched her cheeks. Within she was all fire. Leaning towards the glass, she cried aloud:

"My God! I'm forty!"

She put on one of her prettiest nightgowns and looked again. The nightdress was a litte, silk, low-cut thing. Now she looked better. She tried doing her hair for the night in several different ways. Although, why?

Suddenly she found a way which suited her, wonderfully softened the rather heavy outline of her face. Her heart beat quicker as she seized upon the mode. "I shall always do it this way at night," she thought. She got into bed, feeling like a woman does when she is looking beautiful. She tossed away her white pillow for two rose-silk pillows which were kept on the bed in the daytime to make it look dainty.

Still staring wakefully into the dark, she heard her husband coming to bed. She heard the first tiniest sound of his stirring below; the pushing back of his chair as he rose; the opening and shutting of the door; the almost noiseless fall of his slippered feet upon the thickly-carpeted stairs. She was aware of all. She felt, rather than heard, him passing her door. And the whole of her, body and spirit, cried out: "Will!"

He paused, not wishing to hear; but she, wishing him to hear, called again; again and again.

He opened the door.

"Ah! You're in bed. Did you speak?"

"I—called. P-p-put the light on——"

He switched it on, and stood there. She sat up, leaning an elbow on the rose-silk pillows, staring at him. "G-g-good-night," she said. Her look and gesture invited him near. He came near cautiously. He did not want to come.

"G-g-good-night," she repeated, looking up at him.

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He gave her a kiss. His manner was indeed that of a man bestowing a small gift—a very small one.

"I'm sleepy," he said. "I won't stay and talk. Didn't want me for anything, did you?"

After a pause, he knowing; she knowing that he knew——

"No," she said. "No."

"Good-night," he said, turning, and he went out.

She wept herself passionless.

After breakfast next morning she packed her things. Through the half-closed door of his room as she passed along the corridor she caught a glimpse or two of her husband similarly engaged. She went to his door, ostensibly to say: "Can I help?" but really, as she was aware within herself, from an aching curiosity.

He replied: "No; no. You're busy yourself," his look and tone waving her away, but not before she had seen a new suit, a new suit of light grey tweed.

She passed on to her room and looked about for her own things. Like most domestic women who are good and conscientious managers of purses, houses, clothes, and all those details of a dutiful woman's life, she had certain garments which were her best, to be taken care of. She packed nothing but these, in a kind of sullen passion of hope of she knew not what. She had a new black frock bought for just one night three weeks ago when her husband had taken her to the theatre. He had not, however, noticed the dress. It had been furtively, deliberately and confusedly planned to rouse him. But after its wearing she had had to readmit to her reluctant self that it is not the frock so much as the woman within.

She went by the mid-afternoon train to Westbourne. She found herself in a delightful bedroom overlooking the sea. The sun was on the waves; the sky was blue; the horizon very clear and far. She was in that curiously receptive state of deep despair in which woman — or man too — will walk straight to heaven or hell, whichever offers first. As she stood looking from the window, idly playing with the tassel of a blind, the excitement of absolute nothingness got hold of her. She turned away from the window; looked at her face in a glass. It had something in it which was not there this morning. She was troubled, and yet she had a clear feeling that destiny drove. "I am glad I came here," she said to herself.

She rang for tea to be brought to her room, and lay down on the bed. In the oncoming dusk she lay thinking, and although her thoughts were confused, she seemed to reach vast conclusions. She loved lying there thinking thus, so much that she could have lain drowsing for hours; but she had a very sharp and definite wish to see if something were not going to happen; could not happen. Besides, she remembered the black frock, and she had a longing, entirely sensuous, to put it on.

So she arose, and put on her finest *lingerie*, her finest silk stockings, and the black frock. She perfumed the water in which she washed her hands, and perfumed her hair. In hotels she had been accustomed to wear high dinner frocks, no jewellery. To-night, for no reason, she departed from this good taste.

Cosmetics were aids she had never used, but she possessed rouge and a lip-stick, bought some months ago after listening to a discussion on the merits of certain makes between a few garrulous women. Although she had bought she had not yet experimented with them. But to-night she made up her face, tentatively, breathlessly, till she saw she was gaining brilliance, when she went about the business with a sure hand.

All this for a half-empty hotel——

It was rather late when she went down to dinner in a half-empty dining room.

The head waiter saw her coming in the *décolletée* black gown that clung like a snake's skin, with her delicately-rouged, powdered and pencilled face, and he had in his mind, instantly, the right table to allot her. As she entered the room, seeing it in a mist because of the strange thrills in her, the diners, sparsely dotted about, turned and stared; stopped eating and whispered.

Florence had never before in her life made a like sensation.

The head waiter preceded Florence smilingly to the lower part of the L-shaped room. He had unerringly picked her table.

He seated her at it; hovered over her, all attention for her order.

"An appetiser, madame?" he murmured.

She ordered a Martini.

When he moved away she saw that he had given her a place near another solitary diner, a man, and that their tables were oases in quite a little desert of unoccupied ones.

She knew quite certainly that he was looking at her, and why. And she turned her head and looked at him.

He was of the type of man beloved by all women, young or old, rich or poor, cold or warm; but his own loves would be few, and light-hearted. He was lean, good-looking and intensely male. He had blue eyes which looked light in his browned face. He was full of strength, a cynical humour and a

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The head waiter . . . hovered over her, all attention for her order. . . . When he moved away she saw that he had given her a place—

masterly charm. His world—a very wide and untrammelled space—was good to him; he so ordered it.

He was probably in the late thirties, but would look the same for years and years. His looks told of long days in the saddle

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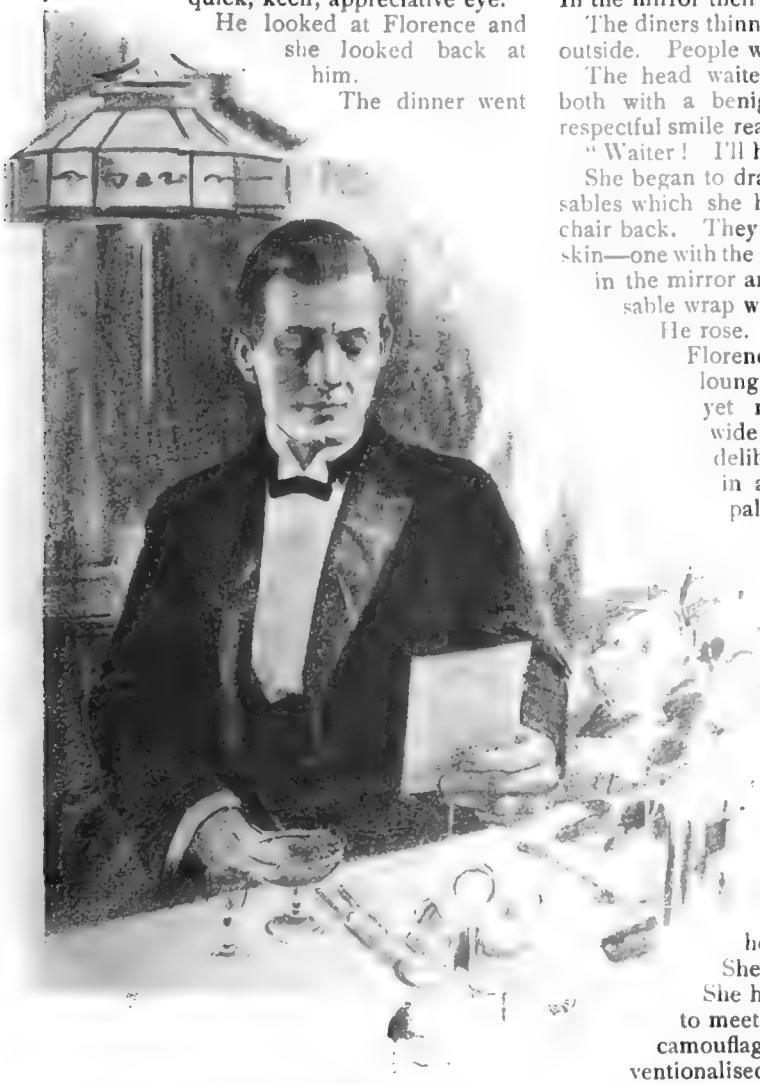
over wild places, and yet they told, too, that all the arts and pleasures of highest civilisation flowed obediently to his finger-tips, and that he selected from them exquisitely like a good *gourmet*. For a woman he had a quick, keen, appreciative eye.

He looked at Florence and she looked back at him.

The dinner went on unhurried to its close. Some while before she had finished he had finished, but he sat idly there, sending to her, on the electric current established between them, the communication that he lingered to see what she would do. She did not hasten; she was thinking what she would do. She was all thrills, and catching sight of herself—as she glanced across at him—in the mirror on the wall away to his right, she was amazed and glorified to see what she looked like. She was not quiet Florence, but a woman blazing with adventure.



—near another solitary diner, a man. . . . She turned her head and looked at him.
[*Page* 89, *col.* 2.]

And she saw that when he was not looking directly at her he studied her in the mirror. In the mirror their eyes met several times.

The diners thinned; there was a palm court outside. People were taking coffee there.

The head waiter hovered between them both with a benign and discreet look, a respectful smile ready. She said:

"Waiter! I'll have coffee outside."

She began to draw over her shoulders the sables which she had dropped off over her chair back. They felt delicious on her bare skin—one with the perfect hour. She looked in the mirror and saw the man noting the sable wrap with approval. She rose.

He rose.

Florence went into the palm lounge. She was dreamy, and yet never had she been so wide awake to life. She went deliberately to a tiny table away in a corner, half screened by palms; here she sat down. The head waiter himself followed with her coffee-tray.

Through the screens of palms Florence watched and waited, not anxious but certain. The man approached unobtrusively, but as sure as she. He was standing before her. In a very deep, quiet, attractive voice he was asking: "May I have my coffee here?"

She merely smiled at him.

She had never been accustomed to meet men without all the petty camouflage of a thoroughly conventionalised woman, but he was different. He and she knew each other. He saw her thoughts. She felt it. Deception between them was useless, flagrantly silly.

"It's very nice of you," he said, sitting down; "I am alone too."

He was offering a cigarette-case.

"Will you smoke?"

"Thank you," she said. She too had a quiet, excellently managed voice, and the sound of it increased his interest in her a thousandfold.

He lighted both cigarettes; his coffee tray

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arrived; they did not hurry over their conversation. And yet she knew that it was flowing along, flowing along——

"It's a very dull place, isn't it?" he said. "Why are you here?"

"I don't know why I came. Simply to go somewhere."

"Do you mean that? It seems to me a pity to do anything, go anywhere, that isn't worth while."

She smiled. "I think this is worth while."

He stared quickly, his eyes glowing, then replied: "Oh, yes! This is very worth while indeed."

She had spoken simply, for perhaps the first time in her life not caring to disguise natural thoughts, natural impulses. Their eyes met for long moments. He added:

"It is nice of you to say that so frankly. What an unusual woman you are!"

"Am I?" she said.

"You are. For instance—don't think I pay foolish compliments; but I, too, am in a simple mood to-night—you are certainly unusual in your present surroundings, being the only beautiful woman here."

All the evening she had known she was beautiful, had felt beautiful. One of those wonderful hours had come to her. She glowed more; her voice took new cadences, and when she laughed her laughter had meaning.

The coffee cups were emptied.

"Put on your furs in which you look so sumptuous," he said, "and come into the gardens. They go to the edge of the cliff. We will see the moon rise."

They went out.

The gardens were planned into an elaborate maze of archways and pergolas. They threaded these slowly talking, till they reached the confines of the place and looked over a dark sea only beginning to be shot with silver gleams that came from somewhere behind the masses of cloud piled lightly in the sky.

She talked limpidly, being happy.

"I shall come to this place again. I love it. I shall stand here and look over the sea. The sea at night——"

The man was half-listening, studying her dim face closely.

"The sea at night is magic. I have never been on a long voyage, but I suppose you have. I know you have. You look as if you'd seen the whole world."

He bent his head close to hers, listening to her. What a charming voice this woman had—this unmistakable woman—this woman out for secret adventure!

"You look as if you had done everything there is to do in the world, and would like to begin doing it all over again just because you enjoyed it so. Life can be like that. I've always thought it could. Only few of us can have things twice. Some men can; no women. Our time is so short."

He laughed softly. "Why waste it?"

He took her in his arms.

Florence was silent, unresisting. And she waited for him to kiss her.

"I think like you," he whispered. "Every moment is precious. Well, every moment like this."

He kissed her. She murmured. "Don't protest, you darling thing," he said. "We both mean it. Directly we saw each other, wasn't it so?"

She put her face against his neck, thinking indistinctly: "I am glad I perfumed my hair."

He kissed her ear and neck and hair, and her breath went.

She sighed.

"Kiss me, do you hear?" he ordered.

She responded passionately and without stint.

"You are like me," he said; "you believe in taking all life offers?"

"Never until to-night," she murmured. "Never until to-night——"

The silver light behind the piled-up clouds brightened and into it sailed the moon, fair and high. He saw the woman's face, and she was smiling. She was in a dream of desire and delight. The lighted hotel might have been leagues behind. As for time, for Florence it did not exist; and yet, somehow, she never lost the subconsciousness of it.

She sighed: "Presently we shall say good-night."

"Presently," he answered.

In the moonlight they looked closely into each other's eyes, searching. And he said slowly: "To-morrow I go away."

"To-morrow!"

He spoke slowly, telling her of plans that had to be followed. In three days he would leave for China. The interim must be spent in London.

There fell between them a long silence, each feeling for the other's thoughts. And he said: "You're a wonderful thing. You've gripped me. Why do you feel so intensely? Why are you so alive?"

He could see her eyes like two stars looking at him.

"I have had a long sleep," she said.

Again a long silence. Then he repeated: "There are three days."

Her eyes still looked at him.

"Wouldn't you stay with me?" he said.

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"So short a while. Is there anyone who would—get hurt by it? Tell me."

She answered him clearly, with the stabbing truth.

"No. No one would be hurt."

"Come with me to-morrow, then?"

His words were a spark, and the tinder of her woman's life was lighted again. They were both aflame. "Promise!" he said. And she promised. And after that suddenly she whispered, "Good-night!" and, breaking away, was gone. Her feet went like a girl's feet. She was all alight. And so happy—so happy.

He followed her in more slowly, to write her a note, surprised and thrilled himself by the adventure. He knew it was not an ordinary adventure such as happened to a man scores of times and was forgotten. He felt that for this woman there was something beautiful in it; very beautiful. It had entranced her mind. So now, as he sat down to write just the very few words, he, too, was entranced. He wrote:

"To-morrow at ten, please. You darling."

That was all; and a chambermaid delivered the note discreetly.

Florence sat up in bed.

She glowed. She felt as if never in this world could she be tired or sad again. She had dressed her hair in the new way she had discovered, a soft, negligent dressing. Her eyes downcast, her fingers caressing the message, she was thinking, not wholly deceiving herself.

"It is not love; but—it is a good imitation. The next best thing. I must have it.

"I must have something—"

She lay down. It was twelve o'clock.

One o'clock, two o'clock; three—four—five—six.

And the sun rose; and the dark battle ended.

At ten the next morning he was in the lounge, waiting. Through the open door the sun poured into the hotel, and his car was parked just outside. He waited.

In a few minutes he saw, coming very slowly towards him, a woman whom at first he hardly recognised. Her walk was almost middle-aged. She was tired and her face was pale. The morning sun showed the little lines that a white night had wrought upon it. All lustre had left her. She reached him.

For a moment he was speechless in amazement. And then: "You!" he exclaimed; but very quietly.

She was not dressed for driving. She wore a shady hat and carried a book as if she were going into the garden.

She just looked at him.

He followed her into the garden; they reached the confines of the place, looking over a bright sea gilded by sun.

She met his eyes.

"Why are you not ready?" was the first greeting he could think of to utter.

She whispered: "I cannot."

"But——"

"I never have. And I cannot."

A silence fell, unlike the passionate silence of last night.

"Why?" he said sharply.

She said: "I think—after all—I want to stay good."

Then the relief of tears came and they dropped down her face unchecked, while, gazing at her, at last, in his amazement, he found words:

"Do you mean," he asked, leaning towards her, "do you mean to tell me that this would be the first time?"

She nodded.

"You—you're a married woman?"

She nodded.

"Living with your husband?"

She nodded. "At least——"

There was again a long silence. And quite suddenly he understood perfectly.

He heard her saying in a tired, washed-out voice:

"You're angry?"

"No," he said quietly. "No."

"You have a right to be angry."

"No," he replied again. "I'm so sorry for your troubles, my dear."

His voice was gentle. He became suddenly the gentlest man she had ever met.

"I am lost," she said, with a feeling that he would understand.

"Yes," he replied. "But you found yourself again."

"Is that me? That woman who has got to go on living——"

"That's you."

There was a rustic seat near the pergola. She dropped on it as if very, very tired. She looked up at him mutely, motioning that he should sit there too, and hesitantly he seated himself beside her, and laid a hand over her limp one on the bench.

She said steadily:

"You'll stay and talk to me awhile?"

"I'll stay awhile," he replied slowly, "and you can talk to me." And as she looked for words, he added in a soft voice: "You can talk to me now. It will be easy. You can say anything from your heart and it will be safe. You poor love! Nature's all up

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against you, isn't she? And we're not much better. Well, you see before you, my dear, one of the most unmoral men in this universe, a man with no right to judge anybody for the sins of the flesh and the devil. So now talk."

She talked.

She talked on and on. She kept nothing back. The inmost secrets of her mind she gave him, because he knew them first. She found him surprised at nothing. When she came to her halting self-explanations they were not new to him either.

"It seems to me, after all, that virtue's a great thing. There doesn't seem any meaning in it, not any meaning at all. It seems so false. And yet it's a great thing.

"It is something I—I cannot give up.

"Perhaps, though a husband tires of his wife, doesn't want her, doesn't——there's some good reason, some good in the woman keeping faithful. Faithfulness seems so meaningless, not to have any reason at all. And yet it is a very great thing.

"No. I—I should not think he's faithful to me. Should you? Do speak!

"Do speak! You won't? Men don't give each other away. But even though he can't possibly be keeping faithful to me, it makes no difference. I must be faithful. It's too strong for me.

"I suppose that's how women feel at the bottom of their hearts.

"Anyway, it's been too strong for me. I didn't know it was there—so strong.

"There must be some great good in keeping vows. I seem to want to keep them, after all, more than I want to break them.

"Do you know what I was feeling? I had been in despair. I had looked at myself in the glass, very critically. I said out loud: 'My God! I'm forty!' I could see time going, and I wanted more love before it was too late.

"I wish love meant less to us; or that our own time was longer.

"You didn't think last night that I was forty, did you?

"To-morrow I shall go home. He's in Paris this week-end—"

As she stopped speaking, it was as if an hour struck. Both were reminded of the passing of time; she knew that his car was parked outside the hotel; that the schedule was made. He nodded at her comprehending look.

"Now," he said, "I'm going."

She gazed at him with a great heart pang.

He bent over her and put his arms closely about her shoulders.

"It seems a poor game for you," he said, "but I think, too, that you'd better stay good."

And suddenly her heart bled to think of parting with him; to think of leaving his arms for ever and ever. She clung around his neck, throbbing. Their lips met. She cried, in the midst of the kiss: "I'll go! Perhaps—oh, take me! I'll go!"

He unclasped her arms, put her gently back into the seat. She huddled there quivering.

"Good-bye, my dear," he said, "good luck—good-bye."

He was gone.

Florence sat clutching at the bench. She wept herself passionless.

Florence unpacked methodically from her suit-case her finest things; laid them away carefully in their place. She undressed slowly, and leaning into the warm night air, breathed in the heavenly spring. She got into bed, very quietly, wakefully, staring at the screen of darkness.

She heard her husband coming to bed. She heard the first tiniest sound of his stirring below; the almost noiseless fall of his slippered feet upon the thick-carpeted stair. And the whole of her body and spirit cried out:

"Will!"

He paused, not wishing to hear; but she, so wishing him to hear, called again; and, switching on the light, he came in.

"Did you speak?"

"I said good-night!"

Her look and gesture invited him near, and he approached. "You're tired," said he.

"No," she said, "I'm not tired."

"You must be," he replied. "Good-night. Didn't want me for anything, did you?"

"No," she denied, "no."

She looked at him before he turned away, switching out the light. And as he made his way in the darkness from her room, he wondered—not very acutely:

"What's she thinking of? What can she be so—regretting?"

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The High Cost of Loving.

By
François.

The ball beneath his arm he laid,
His eyes she could not quit;
And SHE was simply marmalade,
And HE—well, he was IT.

THE ROYAL MAGAZINE

Once upon a time, wherever there dwelt a beauteous maiden, either a prince in golden armour came along on a white horse, or she fell in love with a simple shepherd who kept his sheep and played rag-time on an oaten pipe (anglicé, saxophone). In neither case did expense enter into the matter. But now, owing to the increased cost of diamonds, the housing shortage, and income-tax, loving is almost prohibitive, as our contributor points out.—(Ed. R. M.)

You, Egeria, whose silken hair waves lovingly athwart your proud head, whose eyes mirror the ever-changing seas, whose teeth are matched pearls in a casket of scarlet, whose little feet dance like gnats in the sunshine, what will you do for love?

That slender youth whose glance is a caress when he gazes after you in the street of the fashionable drapers, who touches your hand worshipfully, who slew mighty men in battle and smites a golf ball as Samson smote the Philistines, what shall he avail, O Most Beautiful?

For your father is a subtle man skilled in the weighing of bank-balances.

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The years that swiftly flutter by
Continued so to flut;
SHE grew into a butterfly,
And HE became a knut.

Sweet Love's celestial cherubim
Contrived their hearts to stir;
SHE all on fire for kissing HIM,
And HE for kissing HER ——

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The words that crushed their amourette
Her ruthless father spoke .
SHE lived eternally in debt,
And HE was stony-broke.—

The dancing of slender youths is nothing to him.

The gleaming of brilliantine on their hair leaves him co'd and he is blind to the creases down the centre of their trouser-legs.

He would rather bestow you on a fat man with several motor-cars and a place in the country, who gives toothsome dinners and possesses a large wine cellar.

Your father is past the age of love and has no sympathy with it, but he understands the extortion of the tax-gatherers.

When I was a young man, Serene One, a girl's luncheon cost but three and sixpence and one dined her for five shillings.

The waters of Champagne flowed at eleven shillings the bottle even in thieving restaurants, and chocolates were half-a-crown a pound.

And if one earned, or was paid, a thousand a year old ladies with daughters yammered, saying: "Behold, he is rich!"

House rent and rates and taxes, another eight shillings a ton on coal; gas, railway fares and petrol up, no butter to-day, margarine only served, five guineas for the littlest hat, fifty millions a year spent in Mesopotamia, coal strikes, railway strikes, chorus-girl strikes——

Truly you are made in Love's likeness, but what hopes have you of marriage, my Egeria?

For the slender youth whose kisses beneath the moon create lovely madness in your pulses behold, he has no money; he cannot afford even so much as a Metallic Elizabeth, which some do call a Tin Lizzie.

And as for the wealthy men, they are few and exacting, fat and bald-headed withal, since to acquire wealth leaves no time for exercise and over-heateth the brain.

Moreover, they are already married, or love not matrimony, preferring to dally with maidens of the theatre, who do not represent a life sentence.

Some say that a crust of bread with the Best-Beloved is sweeter than grilled chicken and pêche Melba with some mere individual

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They tempted Mr. Goldenstein; HER heart he could not woo—

It is good to be like a young poplar for straightness, more beautiful than the rose of Sharon, but it is better to be the sole legatee of a rich uncle in Australia.

Nevertheless, O Pearl of Sweethearts, if it is a case of the slender youth or no one, then if the slender youth has any vim, pep, sand, hoojah, or voltage, as they say, speak to him of the necessity of money and command him "Go, get it!"

Whether he invents an unlosable golf-ball, or backs winners consistently, or wrecks the Stock Exchange is of no consequence.

Goad him with the spur of love, and if he is worthy of you he will come back bringing many bank-notes.

But I am sorry for him, since his path is hard, not to say stony, and in the old days it was not so.

who can afford to pay for them, but do not believe it.

And if the Best-Beloved tell you so, you shall answer "Go to!" and repeat this tale which a wise man told me who had it from his mother:

In a certain city there dwelt a poet who made songs for lovers.

And since the lovers were not rich, he said ever that love sufficed and riches were of no account.

And the lovers bought his songs and in due season he retired, for they were many.

But the lovers were deceived and would have slain him, except that they dwelt in the poor-house and were not allowed out.

You, who have dove's eyes, should hearken to that other poet who exclaimed:

"Sweet is an unexpected legacy,
And passing sweet the death of some old lady."

Moon of my Desire, the cost of kissing has not risen, neither the expense of a caress, but the price of the

—Sweet Rachel owned a diamond mine. But HE was fed up too.

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setting or surroundings thereof is something awful.

Yet a nice girl is not kissed on an omnibus nor caressed in the Park.

The fowls of the air have nests (gratis) and there are rivers for the fish, but you, Egeria, are only mocked with the vain babble of house-agents, the rent of whose dwellings is too high, even if they had any to let.

Come now, therefore, Blue-Eyed One, and we will cast away the chains of civilisation.

I am tired of tubes, restaurants, and picture palaces.

I hate the drudgery of work and the early morning menace of the alarm clock.

I would be free.

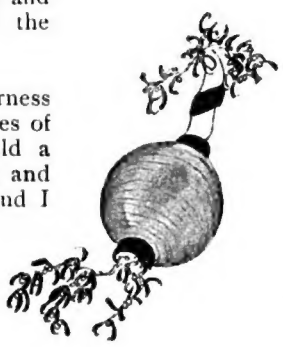
We will depart into the wilderness of Dartmoor or the waste places of Cumberland, and I will build a humble cot with my little axe, and you shall cook our victuals, and I will love you.

And we will feed our sheep on the hillside (if we can afford the increased price of sheep) and dodge the Borough Surveyor's building regulations, and you shall spin the cloth for our garments, and I will spin a halfpenny to decide whether we add a new wing to the mansion or not.

I will wear the simple flannel shirt and overalls of the pioneer.

Your garb shall be Greek, graceful, and inexpensive.

You shall bathe your body in the brook and become bronzed by the sun, and your children shall hunt the field-mouse and the stickleback, and not be afraid of policemen.



political canvassers, or People with Views about Things.

And you shall never wear a decent frock, nor dine out, nor go to the pictures, nor have a hair-wave or a manicure, nor speak to any other man but me.

This being the Natural Life, you will be perfectly happy and love me for ever and ever and ever,

I *don't* think!

HIS Uncle in Australia
Left HIM a million, pat;
Expired of cardiac failure . . .
AND THAT'S THE END OF THAT!

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